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## EMERSON AND THE GERMANS

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Between 1832 and 1845 the interest in German thought and literature was at its height in New England. Theodore Parker in the *Dial* in 1842 facetiously referred to it as the "German epidemic." In order to become familiar with German thinkers and writers, the language which a short time before had been considered barbarous was being eagerly studied, and German writings were being sought either in the original or in translation. Mme. de Staël's *De L'Allemagne* furnished a first incentive to this study. Coleridge's writings which were enthusiastically received opened up the realm of German philosophical speculation and introduced a new and inviting theoretical terminology. Carlyle followed with his vigorous enthusiasms and personality and led on into the more pleasant provinces of German literature, introducing particularly the distinguished classical and romantic poets. There was little first-hand knowledge before 1817, the intellectual influences being predominantly English, but soon after the return of Everett and Ticknor from travel abroad and study at Göttingen a new emphasis was placed upon German culture and particularly upon German scholarly ideals and methods. After the appearance of Carlyle's essays on things German a period of active study and interest set in.<sup>1</sup> De Staël had furnished a general introduction and background, Coleridge invited into new fields and methods of philosophical speculation, Ticknor and Everett revealed a new conception of thoroughgoing and painstaking scholarship and study, Carlyle encouraged in them a burning desire to read, in the original if possible, Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Jean Paul, the drama, the novel, and always and especially Goethe. Charles Follen began to give instruction in German language and literature at Harvard in 1825 and was made Professor in 1830. The return from study abroad of other young enthusiasts, George Bancroft, George H. Calvert, George Ripley, H. E. Dwight, F. H. Hedge, J. F. Clark, J. G. Cogswell and their subsequent activities and writing helped to keep alive and to increase the extent of the "epidemic."

Emerson attended Harvard College from 1817 until 1821. In 1820 he attended some of the lectures of George Ticknor (J. I 65, 75.),<sup>2</sup> who

<sup>1</sup> Cp. S. H. Goodnight, German Literature in American Magazines prior to 1846, *Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, Philology and Literature Series*, IV, 34, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> References are to Emerson's *Journals* (J.) in ten volumes, edited by Edward W. Emerson and Emerson Waldo Forbes, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New

along with Edward Everett undoubtedly aroused his interest in German thought and scholarship. Years later in 1851 (J. VIII 225) he wrote, "Edward Everett had in my youth an immense advantage in being the first American scholar who sat in the German Universities and brought us home in his head their whole cultured method and results . . ." The reading lists in 1820-21 make note of de Staël and Humboldt's work on America. (J. I 83.) He mentions Eichhorn<sup>3</sup> (J. I 336) "the learned German" in 1823, whose untiring scholarly methods described in the lectures of Ticknor and Everett surely must have aroused his astonishment and perhaps admiration, and in 1824 he asks, ". . . if I ought to study German?" (L. I 143, 154.) Two years later he discourses on German theological criticism and on German "scholars" in his letter to Miss Emerson (J. II 77, 83), and we find him referring to Herder and copying passages from de Staël's *De L'Allemagne*. An account of his brother William's visit with Goethe in 1824 is given in the *Letters* in 1825. (L. I, 161.)

In 1828 Dr. Frederick H. Hedge tried to interest him in German literature but he laughingly turned the suggestion aside.<sup>4</sup> In 1829 he was reading Coleridge "with great interest" (J. II 277), and in 1830 he mentions Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* in Carlyle's translation. He was becoming acquainted through articles by Carlyle and others in *Frazer's Magazine*, the *Foreign Review*, and other sources, with German writers, and copied passages from translations of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, *Elective Affinities*, and the *Memoirs* by Falk; also extracts from Lessing, Schiller, Fichte, and Novalis. (J. II 330.) He chose passages discussing human character and the "oracle within us" from Goethe, Schiller's *Wallenstein* (in Coleridge's translation), Schlegel, Novalis, and the description of the three "true religions" from the *Wanderjahre* in Carlyle's translation. (J. II 348-50, 377.) In 1832 he wrote down Goethe's words "Think of Living," with quotations from Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, terming Carlyle "his Germanick new-light writer," and he proposed "to read Schiller, of whom I hear much . . ." (J. II 511, 515, 525.) He mentioned also Schlegel, Hegel, Schelling, and Jung-Stilling's *Autobiography* (all gleaned now from reading Carlyle). Late in 1832, after the death of his first wife and his resignation from the ministry, he embarked on his first European trip. He did not visit Germany. He met Wordsworth, Landor, Coleridge, and Carlyle (in August, 1833). The latter encouraged him to take up the study of German in order to read German writings, particularly Goethe, in the original.<sup>5</sup> Upon his return he acted upon this advice. In 1836 with the York, 1909-14, and to the Centenary Edition of Emerson's Works (W.), edited by Edward W. Emerson, in twelve volumes, same publisher, 1903, and to the *Letters* (L.), edited by R. L. Rusk, in six volumes, Columbia Univ. Press, N. Y., 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, 1752-1827, eminent Professor at Göttingen, sometimes called "the founder of modern Old Testament criticism."

<sup>4</sup> Cp. J. E. Cabot, *Memoir of R. W. Emerson*, 1887; I 139.

<sup>5</sup> Cabot, *Op. Cit.* I 139; W. IV 370; L. I 354, "I am entering into acquaintance with Goethe who has just died," (Aug. 1832); L. I 377, "So I labor at German and Italian a little." (April 1833.)

publication of *Nature* he launched forth upon his public career as a writer and essayist.

Thus Emerson in the formative years of his young manhood, when his own spirit was seeking encouragement and confirmation, was exposed to the "German epidemic" and greatly enlivened by it. He passed through the identical stages of the "disease" that others of his New England contemporaries were subjected to: de Staël, Ticknor and Everett, Coleridge and Carlyle; German theological and philosophical speculation, German scholarship, and German literature. With him as with most of the others the culmination came with the reading and study of the works of Goethe. In 1836 he possessed in his library the complete works of Goethe,<sup>6</sup> with which he became in the course of time generally familiar. In 1840 in *The Dial* and in 1850 in *Representative Men* he published his critical statements on Goethe as writer and man. The years 1832-45 which marked the period of keenest study of things German in New England also mark Emerson's most active reading of German writers. But his interest in them never ceased entirely. Up to the last we find him taking notes from German books and writers in his journals. The spark which Carlyle ignited never died out.

It is not our purpose to discuss Emerson's interest in Goethe. This subject has been frequently treated.<sup>7</sup> For though Emerson's principal interest in German writers lay in Goethe and his works, yet he became acquainted in greater or less degree with the writings of many other German thinkers and literary men. He read them on the whole for what he could get out of them for his own purpose. Next to Goethe, Luther is mentioned and quoted more than any other German, but we shall not include him in this investigation. It is our intent here to examine briefly the record and extent of this reading and acquaintanceship with German writers other than Goethe, to ascertain his own impressions and opinions of them, relying as much as possible upon his own words, with due respect not only to his own thought but also with appreciation of the larger intellectual environment. Space excludes any attempt at interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

Emerson never read German with ease. He was no linguist. He labored with the language in order to read Goethe in the original, but found it difficult, and it was convenient for him to have a dictionary within reach. In 1837 the *Journal* notes (IV 225), "Margaret Fuller left us yesterday morning. Among other things that make her visit valuable and memorable, this not the least, that she gave me five or six lessons in German pronunciation, never by my offer and rather against my will each

<sup>6</sup> Goethe's *Nachgelassene Werke*, Cotta, Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1832, in 55 leather-bound duodecimo volumes. Cp. W. IV 366 f; J. IV 17; L. II 32, "Goethe is a wonderful man. I read little else than his books lately."

<sup>7</sup> Cp. Calvin Thomas, *Goethe Jahrbuch*, vol. 24; Peter Hagboldt "Emerson's Goethe" in *The Open Court* April 1932, 234 f; Paul Sakmann, "Ralph Waldo Emerson's Goethebild" in *Jahrbuch der Goethe Gesellschaft*, 14, p. 166 f; F. B. Wahr, *Emerson and Goethe*, Ann Arbor, 1915.

<sup>8</sup> Cp. the many critical and interpretive studies in English and also Paul Sakmann, *Emerson's Geisteswelt*, Stuttgart, 1927.

time, so that now, spite of myself, I shall always have to thank her for a great convenience — which she foresaw." As late as 1868 (J. X 261) he welcomed a copy of "Flügel's German Dictionary," and in 1871 on his California trip he read Goethe's *Sprüche in Prosa* with the help of "a little German dictionary."<sup>9</sup> The poetic beauties and possibilities of the language were unrevealed to him. He was attracted by the thought content only; when it was possible to procure a good translation he did so. "The respectable and sometimes excellent translations of Bohn's Library have done for literature what railroads have done for internal intercourse. I do not hesitate to read all the books I have named, and all good books, in translations. What is really best in any book is translatable, — any real insight or broad human sentiment . . ." (W. VII 203.)<sup>10</sup> In 1843 (J. VI 357), however, he notes with some sense of satisfaction, "Yet very pleasant is the progress which we make in a new language, the medium through which we explore the thoughts ever growing rarer, until at last we become conscious of its presence in its transparency." Later on when his children grew up he was assisted in his German reading by his daughter Ellen. Edward W. Emerson writes:<sup>11</sup>

"My Father never could read German easily and quickly. I never happened to hear him translate it, but I know this from my elder sister, who lived at home, while I during my college and medical studies and during my medical practice (although then in Concord) did not. Moreover my sister loved German, and was greatly interested in the Grimms, and translated to my Father endlessly long letters from Madame Grimm written in the, to him, impossible German script.<sup>12</sup> I know, however, that my sister never read Goethe, or the German renderings of the Persian Poets, to him. Also, it is on her always accurate authority that I say that Mr. Emerson read through, in some sort, Goethe's *Gesammelte Werke* in the little pocket volumes to which I am sure I referred in the notes to the Centenary Edition of the Works. But we must remember that, while Mr. Emerson read them, he read them as he read all other books, quickly finding *what was for him* in the volume, and spending scant time on the rest. But he certainly was greatly interested in Goethe and spent much time between 1835 and 1845 in reading, and copied many passages in his journals, from him."

In 1861 in the *Journals* (IX 344) he wrote a paragraph on Originality — "How easy it is to quote a sentence from our favorite author, after we have once heard it quoted! how unthought of before! 'Tis like our knowl-

<sup>9</sup> Cp. J. B. Thayer, *A Western Journey with Mr. Emerson* 1884, p. 17; "On these journeys he always had one or two books in his satchel, often Latin or French. 'One should dignify and entertain and signalize each journey or adventure by carrying to it a literary masterpiece and making acquaintance with it on the way' . . ." (Edward W. Emerson, *Emerson in Concord*, 1888, p. 181.)

<sup>10</sup> "Bohn's Library now furnishes me with a new and portable Plato, as it had already done with a new Goethe." (J. VIII 35, 1849.)

<sup>11</sup> In a letter to the present writer, March 25, 1914; Cp. also W. IV 370.

<sup>12</sup> "The German printed type resembles the Gothic architecture." (J. IV 289.)



edge of a language; we can read currently in German, but if you ask me what is German for *horse*, or *pump*, I cannot tell." He was always careful to see that his own children "should do well in Latin and Greek." "The modern languages he was careless about, for he said one could easily pick up French and German for himself."<sup>13</sup>

An examination of the *Journals*, especially of the yearly reading-lists, reveals that Emerson was familiar to some extent with the works of a great many German writers. Most of these were names well known in New England among the devotees of German culture, poets, philosophers, historians, scientists, scholars. His predilection for translations is borne out by the fact that he seldom quotes in the original language.<sup>14</sup> Many passages were copied down from secondary sources. If the passage pleased him particularly he searched oftentimes for the original work. Many of his friends and acquaintances who were better linguists and possessors of a much wider knowledge of German writers and writings, such as Margaret Fuller, J. F. Clarke, F. H. Hedge, gave him helpful information and guidance in his reading. Emerson's mind during these years was always keen and on the alert; his impressions were individualistic and genuine. He copied and quoted simply to refresh and confirm his own thought and opinion, and many such passages found their way from the *Journals* almost verbatim into the Essays.

Up to 1845 we find references in the *Journals* to Schiller, Herder, Lessing, Schlegel, Tieck, Jung-Stilling's *Autobiography* (1832), Jean Paul, Wieland, Novalis,<sup>15</sup> all of them at second hand. Of course various works of Goethe are mentioned, as are various related volumes of memoirs and correspondence, those of Falk, Merck, Zelter, Eckermann, and Bettine von Arnim, whose account of Beethoven in her *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (which he seems to have read first "in a notice of that book in the [London] Gentleman's Magazine for October, 1838") interested him greatly. Boston was becoming alive to the importance of German music. Emerson was fond of Bettine von Arnim's work, "that eminent lady, who in the silence of Tieck and Schelling, seems to hold a monopoly of Genius in Germany." (W. XII 482; L. II 136, 208.) "If I went to Germany I should only desire to see her." Hans Sachs is mentioned alongside of Chaucer in 1840 (J. V 417). Sealsfield (Karl Postl) is listed (*Süden und Norden*) and the Countess Hahn-Hahn (*Countess Faustina*) in 1845, Börne along with Wieland's *Abderites* in 1843. He copies passages in 1830 (J. II 377, 423) from the Coleridge version of Schiller's

<sup>13</sup> Cp. Edw. W. Emerson, *Op. Cit.* p. 173; "... it is French novels that teach us French, and German that teach us German. The passions rush through the resistance of grammar and strange vocabulary, and facility being once obtained, the feebler appetite of taste and love of knowledge suffice to habituate us in the new land." (J. IX 563, 1863.)

<sup>14</sup> Goethe's word *Entsagen* is copied in J. IV 452; and Tieck's *Waldeinsamkeit* is used as a title. (W. IX 249.)

<sup>15</sup> "The ardent and holy Novalis." (W. IV 280.) Emerson was fond of quoting from Schlegel: "In good prose every word is underscored." (W. X 169; J. II 401, 1831, etc.); L. II 70, 87, 136, 265, 269.

*Wallenstein*, those lines which express the importance of self-reliance and self-dependence, of spiritual inwardness: "In your own bosom are your destiny's stars, confidence in yourself, prompt resolution, This is your Venus and the sole malignant, The only one that harmeth you is Doubt." In 1831 he copies "Thekla's Song" from the *Edinburgh Review* of October, 1830, and in 1832 (J. II 525) quoting from Carlyle's *Life of Schiller* he proposes "to read Schiller." In 1834 (J. III 262) he is again noting down passages from *Wallenstein* which fit in with his own reflections: "Self-contradiction is the only wrong; For, by the laws of spirit, in the right Is every individual character That acts in strict consistence with itself." He reads for thoughts and lines; the art work as a whole, the tragic conflict of the drama, even its moral tone, seems to have left no impress upon him. In 1839 (J. V 315) he mentions "being familiar with Schiller's War," evidently Schiller's *History of the Thirty Years War*, and in 1840 we find him reading among other things Brooks' translations of *Wilhelm Tell* and *Maria Stuart*. (L. II 265.)

Emerson was also doubtless familiar with James Marsh's translation of Herder's *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, which appeared in 1833 and was well known. Marsh had in 1829 published Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*, with a preliminary essay, which had been widely and enthusiastically read, among others by Emerson. He warmly supported Herder's championship of intuition over against reason in theological, philosophical and literary matters. Theodore Parker termed Herder "so sweet and beautiful" in *The Dial* in 1842.

Jean Paul Richter,<sup>16</sup> Herder's friend and admirer, whom Carlyle praised and commended and Menzel lauded, offended Emerson. In 1835 (J. III 493) he notes, "I dislike the bad taste of almost everything I have read of Jean Paul"; in 1837 (J. IV 93), "a portion of their poets and writers are introspective to a fault, and pick every rose to pieces — Tieck and Richter. Wieland writes of real man, and Herder, and above all, Goethe . . ." Emerson was conscious of Jean Paul's stylistic excesses. In 1842 (J. VI 283), "Everyman writes after a trick, and you need not read many sentences to learn his whole trick. Richter is a perpetual exaggeration and I get nervous." As late as 1863 (J. IX 371) on his trip to the West Emerson was reading *Titan*, "and for its noble wisdom and insight, forgive, what still annoys me, its excessive efflorescence and German superlative. How like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* is its culture, manners, and wisdom! Rome is the best part of it, and therein it resembles Goethe the more."<sup>17</sup>

He hastily read through Menzel's history of German literature in 1841, which had appeared in George Ripley's *Specimens of Foreign Stand-*

<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth Buckminster Lee's *Life of Jean Paul F. Richter*, a translation of his autobiography to which she appended a biographical sketch, appeared in 1842. Translations of some of Richter's principal novels were widely read, appeared individually and also in the Bohn Library. Carlyle's essay was also influential and appeared first in the *Foreign Review* in 1830.

<sup>17</sup> Cp. also L. III 346, 411; II 269.

ard Literature in 1840, and chided himself, "I thought you had known better. Adhere, sit fast, sit low." Menzel's book was in Theodore Parker's words full of "violent prejudices" and "unmanly hostility to Goethe" — "We hope the book will be read with caution, as a guide not to be trusted."<sup>18</sup> Its author had been a former friend and political ally of Professor Follen of Harvard.

In 1854 (J. VIII 474) he mentions Heine, copying down his views on the clarity of the French language, "Translate it into French, and you dispel instantly all the smoke and sorcery, and it passes for what it is." Heine is also mentioned in the books "quoted or referred to" in 1870.<sup>19</sup> In the list for 1836 we find Pückler-Muskau's *Tour in England* (J. IV 174); in 1840 he lists Karoline von Günderode (J. V 501), recommended beyond doubt by Margaret Fuller, whose translation of Bettine's *Günderode* appeared in 1842.<sup>20</sup> In 1862, 1863, he mentions and quotes from Varnhagen von Ense's works and *Tagebücher*. (J. IX 459, 580, X 343.) In 1856 and 1857, the reading list contains the name of the German-American periodical *Atlantis, eine Monatschrift für Wissenschaft, Politik und Poesie* published at Cleveland, Ohio. In later years his *Journals* disclose some interest in early Germanic folk-lore and in the history of the early Germans. Tacitus' *Germania* is among the books listed in 1852 (J. VIII 354) along with Ossian and Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*. The older and the younger Eddas are mentioned in 1848 (J. VII 562; L. V 28) and Snorre Sturleson along with the *Nibelungenlied* in 1870 (J. X 343). Angelus Silesius is noted in 1859 (J. IX 254), and in 1856 (J. IX 24) in discussing distinctions between the classic and the romantic, and of course quoting from Goethe he writes quite surprisingly, "Wagner made music again classic."

Like other New England Transcendentalists Emerson was under the influence of German idealistic philosophy as it took its course from Kant through Hegel. In Plato and the Neo-Platonists, however, the basis of his own philosophical speculations was laid. His greatest teacher was nature; from nature sprang the sources of his inspiration. Life, as has been said, was his "dictionary,"<sup>21</sup> and his constant guide was his own inner-voice, the "oracle within." At all times he was secure from erratic theorizing by his sound Yankee common sense. His readings in German philosophy aided and abetted his own ideas. German Transcendental philosophy fitted in with his Platonism. He was no imitator. Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, were used by him as he needed them to elucidate and substantiate his own

<sup>18</sup> Cp. Theodore Parker's essay on German literature in *The Dial*, 1842, a review of Felton's translation of Menzel.

<sup>19</sup> Emerson seems to have had little interest in Heine, as might be expected, though reviews, translations, extracts appeared in American periodicals after 1828. Longfellow in 1842 discussed briefly the Young Germany movement, particularly Heine and Gutzkow in *Graham's Magazine* vol. 20, pp. 134 f; in 1849, a lengthy article appeared in the *North American Review*.

<sup>20</sup> Cp. L. II 388, (March, 1841) E. P. Peabody's *Günderode*, Boston 1842; a copy of the first part of *Die Günderode*, Leipsic 1840, was evidently in Emerson's library.

<sup>21</sup> Cp. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England*, 1815-1865, 1936, p. 202.

exposition and argument. He read them mostly at second hand, in translation, briefly, or in articles and books about them.<sup>22</sup> It is not our purpose here to present an analysis of Emerson's thought in its relationship to the Germans, but simply to record some of his scattered statements concerning them.

Mme. de Staël, of course, gave him an early background. Coleridge, drawing heavily on A. W. Schlegel, helped to fill in. Soon he was inquiring concerning Herder, reading from Hegel, and quoting Mendelssohn's *Phaëdo*. In 1834 he noted, "in Boston, Hedge read me good things out of Schleiermacher." (J. III 393.) In 1835 he mentioned the German mystic Jakob Böhme (Behme, Behmen, or Boehmen, he was called) and became interested in the *Aurora*.<sup>23</sup> He valued the philosophical work of Kant with its philosophical terminology; he emphasized the significance of the Categorical Imperative and applauded Kant's rescue of the moral world and his revelation of the bases of intuitive knowledge. (W. II 287; I 339.) Fichte's ethical idealism appealed to him, "The strength of his moral convictions is the charm of the character of Fichte." (J. X 318, 1870; L. III 346.) In 1841 he referred to Barchou de Penhoen's *History of German Philosophy from Leibnitz to Hegel*. (J. VI 145.)<sup>24</sup> He first took the Kantian distinction between Reason and Understanding from Coleridge, found it again in Goethe as well as in German Transcendentalism in general.<sup>25</sup>

Schleiermacher and Plato were to him German and Greek "heroes and giants of intellectual labor," whose learning he had to meet and face. (J. IV 12.) For he was convinced of the fact in his own intellectual struggles, that "Victory over things is the destiny of man; of course, until it be accomplished, it is the war and insult of things over him . . . All that we care for in a man is the tidings he gives us of our own faculty through the new conditions under which he exhibits the common soul." German thought, particularly Schelling, via Coleridge, helped him to develop his ideas concerning the Over-soul, to find a unity in the variety, the one in many. "Nature is too thin a screen; the glory of the one breaks through everywhere." (J. VI 25, 1841; L. III 100.) So it breaks through in man's "inner oracle," in his intuitive soul. In 1833 (J. III 201) when at sea on his first European trip he wrote: "The purpose of life seems to be to acquaint a man with himself . . . The highest revelation is that God is in everyman," — all of which is so fundamental to his own philosophical faith and which he had stated even more succinctly in 1831 (J. II 404), "God in us worships God." Fichte had said, "God becomes conscious in man."<sup>26</sup> Emerson's words in 1834 (J. III 399) are not far re-

<sup>22</sup> L. III 98, Emerson received letters, books on German philosophy and kindred subjects from Charles Stearns Wheeler, who was studying at Heidelberg. (1842 f.)

<sup>23</sup> Cp. W. III 34, IV 117, 143; J. VI 517.

<sup>24</sup> Barchou de Penhoen (Auguste Théodore Hilaire), *Histoire de la philosophie allemande, depuis Leibnitz jusqu'à Hegel*, Paris, 1836.

<sup>25</sup> Cp. J. IV 93, 1836; W. IV 295; Cabot *Op. Cit.* I 161, 218.

<sup>26</sup> Brooks, *Op. Cit.* p. 190.



moved from Goethe's exposition of the "three true religions" in the *Wanderjahre*, "Blessed is the day when youth discovers that Within and Above are synonyms."

Emerson recognized and treasured the moral integrity and inwardness of the great German philosophers, the "characteristic of the Teutonic mind to prefer the idea to the phenomenon . . ." (J. VIII 421, 1853). Jacobi, "the Transcendental moralist," who "refused all measure of right or wrong except determinations of the private spirit" and obeyed the divine impulse from within (W. I 336), Ludwig Feuerbach (*das Wesen des Christenthums*) are mentioned in the reading-lists. (J. VIII 82.) Although in 1855 he found Hegel difficult, in 1866 he was reading with "much interest" and profit J. H. Stirling's *The Secret of Hegel*, (L. IV 531; J. X 143). In 1864 he read the "lively" article on Schopenhauer in the New York *Commercial Advertiser* of May 31, which, he found, "eclipses Hedge's learned paper in the *Examiner*." He makes brief notes on Schopenhauer's basic tenets with the comment that he "learned his secret of the Buddhists." (J. X 33.) But of course Schopenhauer's philosophy rebuffed him. Later he wrote, "A Schopenhauer, with logic and learning and wit, teaching pessimism — teaching that this is the worst of all possible worlds, and inferring that sleep is better than waking, and death than sleep — all the talent in the world cannot save him from being odious." (W. VIII 138.)

Emerson like many others in educationally-minded New England had the highest admiration for German scholarship. He had heard it praised during his student days at Harvard by Ticknor and Everett, and later by others both in print and by word of mouth. In time he came to use quotations from German scholarly works, particularly history, quite freely in his own writings, gathering from here and there, from first- and second-hand sources. Such passages gave a touch of learning and scholarship to his own words, and they were used always to drive home his own thought, as if the German scholar gave his point something of the stamp of authority. His own opinion of the value and position of the scholar was a very high one and free from many of the pedantic and stifling characteristics of German research and learning. "The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise and guide men by showing them facts amid appearances."<sup>27</sup>

New England was appreciative of historical writings. Emerson read with interest such historians as Barthold G. Niebuhr (J. IV 174, and VIII 587, *Letters and Roman History*), who was one of the first to insist upon historical accuracy and careful study of source material, Johannes von Müller (J. III 575), Arnold Heeren of Göttingen, whose *Ideas on the Politics, Mutual Relations and Commerce of the Leading Peoples of the Ancient World* he used in his essay on history in the first series (J. V 17, 154). He was acquainted with the books of Menzel (1841) and Gervinus (1849) on literary subjects (L. IV 390). He considered Winckelmann

<sup>27</sup> Edw. W. Emerson, *Op. Cit.* p. 83.

the authority on Greek art (J. V 154, 1838; VI 145, 1841),<sup>28</sup> and enjoyed Goethe's essay on him (J. VIII 91, 1850). In 1846 he mentions Karl Otfried Müller's *Introduction to Greek Mythology* in his book list and in 1850 Heeren's *Greece*, translated in 1824 by George Bancroft. And strangely enough in 1852 (J. VIII 351) we find a brief quotation entitled *Fate* from Karl Marx — "The classes and races too weak to master the new conditions of life must give way" — which he might use in substantiation of his own teaching of self-reliance. That Emerson was not entirely impervious to the problems presented by social conditions in the Old World is quite evident as early as his first trip to Europe, when in Naples in 1833 he noted in his *Journal*, "Goethe says, he shall never again be wholly unhappy, for he has seen Naples: if he had said *happy*, there would have been equal reason. You cannot go five yards in any direction without seeing saddest objects and hearing the most piteous wailings." (J. III 71.)

Goethe "the all-knowing poet" and Alexander von Humboldt "the encyclopaedia of science" (W. VII 323), however, represented German science and scholarship at its best to Emerson. He dwelled constantly upon this point and expressed himself at length in his writings, on Goethe in the *Representative Men* and on Humboldt in his remarks at the centennial anniversary of the German scientist's birth in Boston, where Agassiz gave the principal address. (W. XI 456.) Their minds were giant storehouses of facts, always alert and alive in assembling and selecting knowledge gained from the passing show of phenomena and ready on the instant to gather in the deeper meaning. Humboldt and Goethe were the "only rivals" in the universality of their knowledge of the great learned men of the past. "The men of science, so-called, the scholars, are fops by the side of these colossi." (J. VIII 50, 1849.) Goethe acted as a "bridge" by means of which Emerson entered into the realm of scientific investigation and scholarship.<sup>29</sup> In 1834 he became acquainted with Goethe's studies in the metamorphosis of plants and interested in his theory of the *Urpflanze*, the "Arch-plant" (J. III 293), and like many others in New England as a layman he valued the *Farbenlehre*: "Goethe is in the right in his mode of teaching colors; i. e. practically, humanly." (J. V 506, 1841.) In 1838 we find it mentioned in the Letters (II 164), "The charm of Goethe's *Farbenlehre*, and very charming it is . . .," and again in 1867 (J. X 211), "Goethe found the true theory of colours." As Emerson grew older Goethe became for him more and more the man of wisdom, the "cheerful Franklin-like philosopher,"<sup>30</sup> "the pivotal man of the old and new time with us . . . No matter that you were born since Goethe died, — if you have not read Goethe or the Goetheans, you are an old foggy, and belong to the antediluvians." (J. VIII 91, 249.) "It will hereafter be noted

<sup>28</sup> "The life and letters of Niebuhr, even more than his Lectures, furnish leading views; and Winckelmann, a Greek born out of his time, has become essential to an intimate knowledge of the Attic genius." (W. VII 202; VI 413.)

<sup>29</sup> Edw. W. Emerson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>30</sup> Longfellow in *Hyperion*, 1839, had called Goethe "a kind of rhymed Ben Franklin."

that the events of culture in the Nineteenth Century were, the new importance of the genius of Dante, Michel Angelo, and Raffaele to the Americans; the reading of Shakespeare;<sup>31</sup> and above all, the reading of Goethe." (J. VIII 214, 251.) The Goethe of Eckermann, of the *Tag- und Jahres-Hefte* and the *Sprüche* was the Goethe he admired, not the poet and the creator of *Faust*. Goethe became the symbol to him of the man of wisdom, the Writer, the storehouse of facts and ideas, "sincere," "healthy," practical. "Always the man of genius dwells alone, and like the mountain, pays the tax of sorrows and silence for elevation. . . . His thinking as far as I read him is of great altitude and *all* level." (J. IV 201, 1837.)

For Humboldt Emerson had great respect. In him he found an all-encompassing mind, "one of the wonders of the world . . . who appear from time to time, as if to show us the possibilities of the human mind, the force and range of the faculties, — a universal mind . . . so that a university, a whole French Academy travelled in his shoes. . . . The wonderful Humboldt . . . How he reaches from science to science, from law to law, folding away moons and asteroids and solar systems in the clauses and parentheses of his encyclopaedic paragraphs! There is no book like it (the *Cosmos*); none indicating such a battalion of powers . . ." (W. IX 457 f.) He "is magnificent, too, as a distributing eye. His glance is stratification; geography of plants, etc." (J. VI 400, 1843.) Emerson was familiar with Humboldt's *Cosmos*, his letters and other writings. (W. VII 448.)

German scholars with their untiring industry, said Emerson, possessed "an integrity of mind which sets their science above all other." (J. IX 30, 1856.) Their genius for learning made "theirs now at last the paramount intellectual interest of the world (W. XII 312), and their books were distinguished by "an ideal order" of ideas and thoughts, (J. IX 182, 1859). He admired, as he put it, the Teutonic "singleness of heart," and added, "the German name has a proverbial significance of sincerity and honest meaning." (W. V 116.) The following words tell us why Humboldt and other German scientists and thinkers appealed especially to him and why their basic conclusions fitted in so aptly with his own. "They have posed certain philosophical facts on which all is built, the doctrine of *immanence*, as it is called, by which everything is the cause of itself, or stands there for its own, and repeats in its own all other; 'the ground of everything is immanent in that thing.' Everything is organic, freedom also, not to add, but to grow and unfold." (J. IX 30, 1856.) German scholars confirmed his own inclination to study the "facts" in nature and events as well as to give heed to the "truths" which came from the small but mighty voice within; their learning and thinking at its best supported his teachings of

<sup>31</sup> The "influence of the genius of Shakespeare in the last one hundred and fifty years is a fact of the first importance. It almost alone has called out the genius of the German nation into an activity which, spreading from the poetic into the scientific, religious, and philosophical domains, has made theirs at last the paramount intellectual influence of the world, reacting with great energy in England and America." (W. XII 312.)

the Over-soul, which were part and parcel of his own being. It must always be remembered that Emerson was not a trained, professional scientist, philosopher, or man of learning, that in his reading of and wide acquaintance with the writings of such men, German or otherwise, first or second hand, he was always himself first. Nature and life, not books and theories, were his masters and teachers, his sources of inspiration and guidance, and he listened first and last to the promptings of his own inner voice.

He had personal contact also with the scholarly type of German and doubtless pleasant and beneficial discussions. As early as 1836 he was attracted by the enthusiasm and spirit of Hermann Bokum, who offered to instruct him in German. (L. II 28.) He was acquainted with Dr. Charles Follen of Harvard and also later with the "cultivated German patriot, exile or refugee, who lived for perhaps a year in Concord," Emmanuel Vitalis Scherb, to whose lectures, among others on Hegel, he listened with great pleasure, "a most gratifying monument of culture, his lecture. Such regnant good sense, such a calm, high, generalizing criticism, so sane, so superior, so catholic, so true to religion and reason . . . the good scholar of better masters." (J. VIII 69, 1849; VIII 246, 1851; L. IV 130.) In 1873 in Florence, Emerson and his daughter Ellen had the good fortune to meet Hermann Grimm and his wife, the daughter of Bettine von Arnim. The Emersons had corresponded occasionally with the Grimms over a period of years, and were familiar with Grimm's writings. The friendship between the families lasted for some time, Emerson's daughter Ellen becoming quite fond of the Grimms. (L. V 157.) It is to be remembered also that Hermann Grimm was one of the first Germans to take up the reading and study of Emerson's own writings and to acknowledge his indebtedness to them publicly. He was undoubtedly the most distinguished German of culture and learning whom Emerson ever met in person.<sup>32</sup>

When one considers the high esteem in which Emerson held German learning one asks naturally why he did not visit the country on his European trips in 1832, 1848, and 1873. But let him answer the question himself. "How impossible to find Germany! Our young men went to the Rhine to find the genius which had charmed them, and it was not there. They hunted it in Heidelberg, in Göttingen, in Halle, in Berlin; no one knew where it was; from Vienna to the frontier, it was not found, and they very slowly and mournfully learned, that in the speaking it had escaped, and as it had charmed them in Boston, they must return and look for it there." (J. VII 532, 1848.) "You tell me they are hospitable in Germany; yes, but I do not travel to find hospitable people. If I knew of any magnet that would point to that quarter where are the people whom I wish to see, I would sell all to buy it, and to travel in the direction it indicated, though to Samarcand or Timbuctoo." (J. VIII 5, 1849.) He adds later in 1849, "As for Germany, we have had no interest in it since

<sup>32</sup> J. IX 254, *Essays, Life of Michel Angelo*; W. VIII 183 *Memoirs*; Grimm paid tribute to Emerson in his *Life and Times of Goethe* 1880 (To the Translator) and also in his *Fifteen Essays*. Cp. also L. V 3.



the death of Goethe" (J. VIII 59), and six years afterward he recalls his first trip with the words, "Ignorant enough to go to Europe to see three or four persons, — Wordsworth, Coleridge, Landor, and Carlyle. I should have wished to see Goethe in Germany, but he was then just dead." (J. VIII 501, 1854.) And yet like many of his intellectual friends he lived in expectation always of some other newer light to come from Germany, some successor to Schelling, Fichte, Novalis, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Goethe. "In Germany there still seems some hidden dreamer from whom this strange, genial, poetic, comprehensive philosophy comes, and from which the English and French get mere rumors and fragments, which are yet the best philosophy we know. . . . And now we are still to seek for the lurking Behmen of modern Germany." (J. VII 151, 1846.)

Emerson's *Journals* reveal his wide and varied reading and the use he made of this reading. It was always a source of sustenance and suggestion. He read what well-read, cultured men of his time read in New England, but he was never the servant of books.<sup>33</sup> He never forsook the determination of his young manhood, "Henceforth I design not to utter any speech, poem or book that is not entirely and peculiarly my work." (J. III 361, 1834.) He became acquainted, as we have seen, throughout a long period of time with the major German writers and writings which were being discussed, reviewed, and read in America. Goethe alone he knew well and he read him in the original German with profit, but in most cases he depended wisely upon translations and secondary sources. He was always interested in any new English and American translations, literary or scholarly, from the German, and gladly helped arrange for their publication. (L. III 285, V 190.) He knew the German classic and romantic writers in a general way. Of the Young German writers who became prominent in the thirties and forties he heard at least of Börne, Heine, and Theodor Mundt. He was not interested in German literature as such; he was interested in its thought-content, in what it had to give him, in the learning and erudition of the Germans. It is always to be borne in mind that there existed in New England, and indeed in America in general, two opposite attitudes toward things German, one favorable and the other decidedly unfavorable. Emerson was as a rule a bit reserved in his own reactions; he was too genuinely himself, and properly so. He defended Goethe and German thought against the prejudiced and unreasonable, but he was at times not entirely without misgivings himself. In his *Letter* as Editor of *The Dial* in 1843 he quotes a translation of the "Jeremiad of the despair of Germany," which he takes from Theodor Mundt's account of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, "Then I came to the Germans . . ." etc., — Hölderlin's heart-breaking outburst against a generation that gave him nothing but misunderstanding and madness. He was struck "not a little" by the passage (which must have found ready believers among those hostile to things

<sup>33</sup> "In books I have the history or energy of the past . . . I do not for a moment forget that they are secondary, mere means . . ." (W. XI 506.)

German), "whose tone is still so familiar that we are somewhat mortified to find that it was written in 1799." (W. XII 399.)

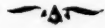
But German literature, philosophy, and scholarship were not only in themselves sources to him of suggestion and revelation, they also opened up to him avenues of approach to other literatures, other peoples and times, notably to the Persian poets and the philosophy of the East.<sup>34</sup> German books and translations, especially those of von Hammer-Purgstall, afforded him many happy hours, over long years, of fond and earnest reflection and speculation. In the Persian poets he found a mystic inwardness, such as he found in German thought, as well as a pithy gnomonic manner of expression which particularly appealed to him.

Hafiz and Saadi, whom Goethe had enjoyed and honored in the *Westöstlicher Divan* interested Emerson deeply. He too in his translations from them (W. IX 298 f.) sought to forge a bond of sympathy and understanding between the East and the West. In his translations he used as a source the German translations and compilations of von Hammer-Purgstall. Thus in truth his translations were from the German, in a way an exercise "on the side of grace and finish."<sup>35</sup> In the books "quoted and referred to" (J. VII 236, 1846) we find mentioned Hammer-Purgstall's *Translations of Hafiz*; in J. VIII 81, 1849, his *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*; and in two references in J. IX 580, 1863, *Translations from Persian Poets*, and Saadi, *apud* von Hammer-Purgstall's German translations. It may be that his reading of Goethe had much to do in arousing his interests in this direction. Of course he became acquainted with the literature of the East very early in his career, but the reading of Goethe's *Divan* and of the explanatory and historical notes which Goethe appended to his volume of poems must have excited his interest in the Persian poets. In his *Journals* he twice mentions reading the *Divan*; "In the scholar's ethics, I would put down — Beharre wo du stehst. Stick by yourself — ; and Goethe's practice to publish his book without preface and let it be unexplained; and further the sentence in *Westöstlicher Divan* about Freedom." (J. IV 79, 1836), and (J. IX 313, 1861) "read from notes of *Westöstlicher Divan*." Goethe in his notes acknowledged at length his indebtedness to the labors of Hammer-Purgstall. Emerson's interest in German and particularly Goethe, then, and his efforts to read the language were rewarded doubly by this introduction to another and older culture. In his own intellectual life Plato and the Neo-Platonists especially, as well as other Eastern sages, Hindu philosophers and Persian poets, played as important, if not in the large more important role than the German thinkers, writers, poets, and scholars. Both the Greeks, the East, and the Germans were shoots which could be readily, sympathetically, and profitably grafted upon the sturdy New England mother plant. It is not without a reason perhaps particularly his own that Emerson termed the Germans "those semi-Greeks." (W. V 254.)

<sup>34</sup> Cp. F. I. Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, 1930, pp. 161 f; W. VIII 237, 412 f; W. IX 298 f, 499 f; L. III 429, 443, IV 531.

<sup>35</sup> Cp. Edw. W. Emerson, *Op. Cit.* p. 231.

In his own thought and writings he caught the spirit, the essence of the great period of German thought and literature better than most of his American contemporaries, many of them more ardent, more conscientious and scholarly students of the Germans, their language and writings, than himself. Perhaps because he could be more objective and was in his own nature more aloof, more independent and self-reliant he was better able to be and to express himself in these matters. After all it is not as strange as he thought, "that the greatest men of the time only *say* what is just trembling on the lips of all thinking men." (J. II 282, 1839.)



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TAUGENICHTS FOR EICHENDORFF

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In recent years Eichendorff's *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* has aroused considerable scholarly interest, particularly in this country.<sup>1</sup> This attention is well deserved. Never again did Eichendorff hit upon a subject at once so universal in appeal and yet so finely attuned to the subtleties of his particular lyrical genius, a judgment in which critics and reading public have generally concurred.<sup>2</sup> But when it comes to interpreting the *Novelle*, to analyzing the author's purpose in writing it, agreement is anything but general. Despite the obvious interest of this problem and its importance for our understanding of Eichendorff, the attempts made to solve it have with a few notable exceptions been somewhat limited in scope. As a rule the work has been considered in the light of some special problem, or it has been studied more or less *in vacuo*, i. e. with little regard for its relative position in Eichendorff's spiritual development. The present study hopes to contribute to a more complete and well-balanced interpretation.

Any attempt to analyze the *Taugenichts* according to the traditional standards of epic composition would be fruitless. Concepts such as plot, motivation, characterization, have no bearing on this *Novelle*, even less so than on Eichendorff's other narrative works. The criticisms often made of his art, namely that his nature descriptions lack individuality, that his characters are not lifelike, that his plots are no plots at all, are entirely beside the point. From a realistic standpoint they are true enough, but it is not fair to judge this work on the basis of objectives which Eichendorff was not interested in attaining, and which, be it admitted, he was wise in not seeking to attain. His one half-hearted attempt at realism, in *Das Schloß Dürande*, is sufficient evidence to show that this approach was not for him.

But if realistic criteria are not to be applied to the *Taugenichts*, on what basis can it be interpreted? Three points of view appear to me significant for the analysis of the work: first, that of *milieu*, used here not with the meaning attributed to it by Taine and the Naturalists, but in

<sup>1</sup> The more important articles which have come to my attention are: Thomas Mann, *Der Taugenichts*. *Neue Rundschau* XXVII, 1916, S. 1478-90 (reprinted with changes in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Berlin 1920, S. 372 ff.) E. P. Appelt, *Selbsterlebtes in E's Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*. *Philological Quarterly* VII, 1928, p. 275-282. Chester N. Gould, *Literary Satire in E's Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*. *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* XXXIII, 1934, p. 167-77. Ernst Feise, *E's Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*. *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht* XXVIII, 1936, p. 8-16. Detlev W. Schumann, *E's Taugenichts and Romanticism*. *German Quarterly* IX, 1936, p. 141-153. A. Bosselmann-Franzen, *Die Bedeutung der Gestalt des Taugenichts in E's Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*. *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht* XXXI, 1939, p. 265-273.

<sup>2</sup> Except Gould, who has been refuted by Feise (op. cit. p. 13 ff.) and Schumann (op. cit. p. 141).



the sense of atmosphere, even mood, insofar as these pertain to the setting of the *Novelle*; secondly, the standpoint of *form*, which is taken to mean the vital impulse from which the typical configuration of the work derives; and lastly, the *Novelle* will be examined in the light of its *symbolic content*, its meaning for Eichendorff and its place in the evolution of the poet's thought. Naturally these three approaches are not mutually exclusive, nor do they exhaust the possible points of view for a fruitful interpretation of the work.<sup>3</sup> Above all, this threefold division, excusable on the grounds of technical necessity, does violence to a charm which is essentially indivisible.

\* \* \* \* \*

The world of nature is the medium which Eichendorff lives and breathes. The peculiar manner in which he experiences and reproduces this world is, more than any other one factor, the key to his poetic artistry. Even the critical works of the later years reveal in their imagery the fascination which the outer world of the senses exerted over the poet, and the extent to which its forms and processes assumed spiritual significance in his interpretation of life. And still, the world as we see it through Eichendorff's eyes is not that to which we are accustomed. One searches in vain here for the cold white reality of everyday life. Eichendorff's temperament has absorbed this cold white light and broken it as in a prism into the myriad shapes and colors of *his* reality. One must not look here for plastic shape and contour, but rather for the subtle play of light and shadow, diffuse and kaleidoscopic. Nature for Eichendorff is not a background against which he unwinds the thread of his narrative, but an atmosphere in which it is immersed. The natural setting is not quiescent and impassive, but mingles into the thoughts and actions of the characters, reflects their moods, occupies their meditations, and at times takes a hand in patterning their destiny.

What has been said so far is true not only of the *Taugenichts*, but of Eichendorff's other works as well. To understand the special position of the *Taugenichts* within the framework of Eichendorff's total conception of nature, it is necessary first to investigate the philosophical premises of this conception, if one may use such terms of a poet so avowedly unphilosophical as Eichendorff. To begin with, Eichendorff is a good Catholic: God is the creator of nature, but is not immanent in it:

"..... ich weiß bloß: die Natur  
Ist nur eine arme demütige Kreatur,  
Die schauernd von dem träumet, in dessen Hand sie ist."<sup>4</sup>

Physical nature belongs to the base realm of the senses; it is materialistic in principle, and its phenomena are vain and transitory. To Eichendorff as to the poets of the Baroque the natural world appears as a fleeting pat-

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for example Detlev Schumann's stylistic analysis.

<sup>4</sup> *Julian*, HKA (Historisch-kritische Ausgabe von Kosch und Sauer, Regensburg, 1908 ff.) I: 2. Teil, S. 529.

tern of illusory images<sup>5</sup> Those who attribute an absolute value to the deceptive beauty of this world, those who succumb to the lure of the senses, are irrevocably lost. But at the opposite pole, opposed to this seductive temporal sphere, is the world of the spirit, incorporeal, absolute, and eternal. This, in brief, is Eichendorff's basic dualism. His works offer one example after another of the conflict between these two worlds in the souls of his characters, who, in turn, are treated with greater or less sympathy by the author according to their success in overcoming the world of the flesh in favor of the world of the spirit.

But Eichendorff's ideal is not flight from the world, and we have already emphasized the important rôle of nature in his works. How is this seeming contradiction to be explained? How can the poet on one hand condemn nature as base materialism and on the other ascribe to it so vital a function in the total economy of his work? The answer is simple: to the discerning eye the beauty of the temporal world is symbolic of a higher life to come: the earth is the antechamber of the temple,<sup>6</sup> a resplendent interlude between two eternities.<sup>7</sup> Viewed thus as a symbol of the divine, nature becomes a legitimate object of man's admiration, indeed his most direct contact with the eternal, the language in which God speaks to him, the mysterious book in which may be read God's secret message.<sup>8</sup> But it is not given to all to see nature in this light. Only the pure in heart can detect in the finite world the traces of the infinite, "Im Irdischen des Herren Spur".<sup>9</sup> The *Taugenichts* is one of these fortunate few, the one character in all of Eichendorff's works who achieves instinctively, without apparent inner struggle, the ideal harmony of the temporal and the eternal. We have here the key to the "Sonntagsstimmung" so characteristic of the *Taugenichts*, where nature appears divested of all base elements and pervaded with a shimmer of the divine.<sup>10</sup> Thus it is that nature never appears to the *Taugenichts* in her sinister aspects, although these play so important a part in Eichendorff's other narratives.<sup>11</sup> Venus, the pagan deity in whom Eichendorff symbolizes the fatal lure of the senses and whom he surrounds with a sultry atmosphere of sensual beauty

<sup>5</sup> One typical example:

"Seh' ich des Tages wirrendes Beginnen,  
Die bunten Bilder fliehn und sich vereinen,  
Möcht' ich das schöne Schattenspiel beweinen,  
Denn eitel ist, was jeder will gewinnen." HKA I 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, Werke hrsg. von Ludwig Krähe (Bong), II 93.

<sup>7</sup> "... ein überglänztetes Zwischenspiel . . ."; *Examensarbeit*, HKA X 145.

<sup>8</sup> "... das große Bilderbuch, das der liebe Gott uns draußen aufgeschlagen hat . . .": *Taugenichts*, Bong III 78.

<sup>9</sup> *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, Bong II 275.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Zur Geschichte des Dramas*, Vermischte Schriften, Paderborn 1866: S. 54: "Indem das Göttliche menschlich, das Irdische aber, die ganze Natur, gottestrunknen in Stern und Baum und Blumen mitredend, zum Symbol des Übersinnlichen wird, spielt das Ganze in einer Höhe, wo das Diesseits und Jenseits wunderbar ineinander klingen und Zeit und Raum und alle Gegensätze in dem Geheimnis der ewigen Liebe verschwinden." This is also the mood of a poem such as "Mondnacht".

<sup>11</sup> The mysterious atmosphere surrounding the events at the Italian castle is quite another thing — probably a persiflage of E. T. A. Hoffmann.

associated with the summer night or the livid splendor of autumn, is powerless over the *Taugenichts*, although he recollects the legends connected with her as he crosses the Campagna en route to Rome. His spirit, far from succumbing to her dangerous charms, is filled with the invigorating freshness of spring and of morning, for Eichendorff the symbols of physical refreshment and spiritual rebirth.

Nature is the predominant but not the sole factor comprising the milieu of the *Taugenichts*. Two other elements serve in large measure to evoke its typical atmosphere: Vienna and Italy. Here again, the poet's approach is not realistic, but it is more important to ascertain the spiritual values which he associates with these localities than to reproach him for not having presented us with a tangible description of them.<sup>12</sup>

To understand why Eichendorff chose Vienna as part of the setting of this *Novelle*, it is necessary to review briefly the circumstances under which it was written. The earliest manuscript of the *Taugenichts*, comprising approximately the first two chapters of the present version, dates from 1817, and it is likely that the work was conceived and begun early in that year or late in the preceding one. The year 1816 was a decisive and melancholy turning point in Eichendorff's career, for it marks his entry into the workaday world of the Prussian bureaucracy and the end of his carefree student days. Before the completion of the *Taugenichts*, which appeared finally in 1826, Eichendorff's spiritual horizon had been further darkened by a series of family catastrophes. It is not strange that the world in which he had grown up seemed to be slipping away from him. Old ties were being forcibly severed on every hand, and only memories of "die schöne alte Zeit" remained to console him. It is to this memory that he gives everlasting tribute in the *Taugenichts*, which becomes thus a poetic transfiguration of the happy days of his youth. It is easy to recognize in the palace overlooking the Danube a thinly-veiled description of Eichendorff's own home on the banks of the Oder.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, such descriptions recur repeatedly in Eichendorff's works, but never more faithfully, more lovingly drawn than here. It is interesting to note how the *Taugenichts* himself blends memories of the mill which had been his home with memories of the palace near Vienna,<sup>14</sup> and how the former becomes associated with the "schwüle Stimmung" which Eichendorff so intimately connects with Lubowitz.<sup>15</sup> Vienna, where he had spent some of the happiest days of his youth, was also home for Eichendorff, a home which appealed to him all the more by contrast

<sup>12</sup> It must be admitted that very realistic details are given in the description of the inn in Lombardy. These probably belong more to Eichendorff's concept "Welschland" than to his concept "Italien".

<sup>13</sup> For biographical details cf. Appelt, op. cit. p. 275 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bong III 32, 37, 42.

<sup>15</sup> "Große Hitze, bange ebne Gegend, (die blauen *Voghesen*) mittägliche Ruhe und Einsamkeit . . . Erinnerungen an Lubowitz." *Tagebücher*, HKA XI 209; "Die Beschreibung der Lubowitzer Nachmittagsschwüle in Deinem Briefe ist so wahr, daß sie mich im Innersten erschreckt." Letter to E. from his brother, HKA XIII 49; cf. *Taugenichts*, Bong III 15, 16, 53, 65.

with the unfriendly atmosphere of Prussian officialdom. In a letter to Philipp Veit in 1815 he wrote from Berlin:<sup>16</sup>

“Sie sehen nun die Donau, St. Stephan und alle unsere alten Jugendbilder wieder; gedenken Sie dabei meiner, lieber Philipp! Ich weiß nicht welche Zauberei dort ist, aber ich werde mein Heimweh nach Wien nicht los und kann mich hier in Berlin noch immer in nichts finden . . . Es ist und bleibt mir hier alles fremd . . .”

Such sentiments are repeatedly encountered in the correspondence of the following years.

Italy too is the goal of Eichendorff's longing, but it would be mistaken to identify Eichendorff's Italy with any existing geographical entity. His Italy is not located on this earth — it is the Romantic land par excellence. It is as significant in its way that Eichendorff never visited the real Italy as that Goethe did. Precisely because he had never seen the country, it could remain for him the goal of unsatisfied longing, a poetic ideal far more beautiful for him than the actual Italian landscape could have been. Eichendorff's Italy is an embodiment of his dualistic view of life, at once the land of pagan sensualism and the center of the Catholic world. Both poles of this dualism are reflected in the *Novelle*. In the scenes at Leonhard's castle, and in the adventure with the hawk-nosed countess at Rome, the naive innocence of the Taugenichts is most severely put to the test. Rome itself, however, appears to him as “die heilige Stadt”, and angels seem to stand guard over its ramparts as he approaches. True, the Taugenichts soon tires of “das falsche Italien”, but the end of the story finds him again planning to set out for the land of Romantic yearning.

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If form is taken to mean the vital force which gives a work of literature its characteristic configuration, then form for the *Taugenichts*, as for the Romantic narrative in general, can best be summed up in one word: movement. For Eichendorff this is the basic law not of epic composition alone, but of life itself. Its manifestation in the narratives is to be seen first of all in the wandering life led by the characters. But the principle of movement is not limited to the larger features of the composition. It penetrates into the very style of the work and into the rhythm of its sentence structure. The sensation of motion is vividly imparted to the reader by the juxtaposition of short, breathless sentences:<sup>17</sup>

“Ich rannte noch einmal um das ganze Haus herum und rief die Maler, aber niemand gab Antwort, die Leute aus dem Hause liefen zusammen und gafften mich an, der Postillon fluchte, die Pferde schnaubten, ich, ganz verblüfft, springe endlich in den Wagen hinein, der Hausknecht schlägt die Tür hinter mir zu, der Postillon knallt und so ging's mit mir fort in die weite Welt hinein.”

Of course the tempo is not always so fast, but even when the Taugenichts

<sup>16</sup> HKA XII 12 f.

<sup>17</sup> Bong III 46.



is asleep or sitting still, we are kept aware of the pulse of life by the ceaseless play of a fountain in the background or the restless motion of the clouds overhead.

On the surface, the *Novelle* appears to be a mere succession of loosely connected episodes or adventures, in which the poet involves his hero by the simple expedient of having him move constantly from place to place. But it cannot be mere accident which guides the *Taugenichts* on his way, for he is a "Glückskind", constantly experiencing seemingly undeserved strokes of good fortune and instinctively avoiding all the pitfalls which lie along his path. Without exerting any will of his own, he proceeds from one fortunate encounter to another, and despite his passivity he achieves the goal on which his heart is set — the marriage with Aurelie. Obviously a benevolent destiny is watching over him, the paternal deity of Eichendorff's naive Catholic faith. Feise in his article on the *Taugenichts* points out the importance of this "Schicksalhaftigkeit des Lebenswegs" for the *Novelle*,<sup>18</sup> and certainly we have here one of the basic themes.

Again the connection between the *Taugenichts* and Eichendorff's own life is clear. Entrance into Prussian officialdom had put an end to the errant existence of Eichendorff's youth just as decisively as to all the other happy experiences of those carefree days. Naturally the *Taugenichts* glorifies this youthful freedom along with the other memories of the past: "... das ganze Studentenleben," says the priest in chapter nine, "[ist] eine große Vakanz zwischen der engen düstern Schule und der ersten Amtsarbeit . . ." Eichendorff's feelings in the early days of his new position must have been similar to those of his hero, when the latter says, after being hired as gardner: "... mir war, wie einem Vogel, dem die Flügel begossen worden sind. — So war ich denn, Gott sei Dank, im Brot." A letter written in this spirit to Fouqué in June, 1816, while Eichendorff was in Breslau preparing for his admission to the position of *Referendar*, seems to contain the germ of the idea which later took shape in the *Taugenichts*:<sup>19</sup>

"Ich habe durch langes, nur zu oft scheinbar zweckloses, Umtreiben im Leben einen weiten Umkreis von Aussichten gewonnen, aus deren Gemisch von Zauber, lächerlicher Dummheit, Freude und Schmerz ich mich manchmal kaum herauswinden kann, und eine unwiderstehliche Lust dabei, gerade nun das alles, was ich gesehen, gehört und durchlebt, einmal recht keck und deutlich zu frommer Ergötzung wieder darzustellen. Gott gebe seinen Segen und erhalte mir Ihre mich immer erfrischende erhebende Teilnahme dazu."

The reader may occasionally detect in the *Taugenichts* a passage which seems to contradict the foregoing, namely the moments in the story when the *Taugenichts*, overcome by loneliness and melancholy, longs for a sheltered haven and respite from his wanderings. Here too, there is

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit. p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> HKA XII 18.

apparently a parallel in Eichendorff's own life. If one accepts the testimony of his brother Wilhelm, the constant companion of his youthful roving, the restless urge of wanderlust seems at times to have appeared to the brothers in an ominous, forbidding light. We read in a letter from Wilhelm of the spell cast over them both by the evil spirit, which drives them relentlessly through an unfriendly world.<sup>20</sup> We shall have occasion to return to this feeling later as symptomatic of a new trend in Eichendorff's life.

In discussing movement as the basic form of the *Taugenichts*, it would be interesting to hazard a guess as to the probable source of this important feature of the work. Much the same principle may of course be observed in all of the novels patterned on *Wilhelm Meister*, and it has been pointed out that the notion of benevolent Providence guiding the course of life has its parallel in the secret society of Goethe's novel.<sup>21</sup> Eichendorff has obviously imitated Goethe in *Abnung und Gegenwart* (1812). But many features of the *Taugenichts* point in a different direction, namely towards the picaresque novel or the novel of adventure, possibly directly to *Simplizissimus*. References in the *Tagebücher* and in *Abnung und Gegenwart* adequately prove that Eichendorff knew and admired Grimmelshausen's work, and it can be demonstrated that he imitated an episode from *Simplizissimus* in his later narrative *Eine Meerfahrt*. To be sure, the similarities between the *Taugenichts* on the one hand and Grimmelshausen and the picaresque novel on the other are somewhat superficial, and scarcely to be taken as conclusive evidence of profound influence. They are mentioned here for what they are worth. The *Taugenichts* is Eichendorff's only narrative written in the first person, a point which is important chiefly as an admission of the poet's deep personal interest in this work, but which might well have been suggested by *Simplizissimus*. Furthermore, Eichendorff's later narrative *Die Glücksritter*, intimately related to the *Taugenichts* in form and content, actually plays in the seventeenth century, and approaches in its leading characters even more closely than the *Taugenichts* the spirit of the picaresque novel. It may be further noted that the hero of the picaresque novel, like the *Taugenichts* and Klarinett in *Die Glücksritter*, was often a miller's son, that the latter was usually picked up off the street, given employment as a servant, and, due to his inexperience in the ways of the world, subjected to the teasing of his comrades.<sup>22</sup> Even the lack of an inner development in the *Taugenichts* is also characteristic of the novel of adventure,<sup>23</sup> though of course not of *Simplizissimus*.

Still another literary type apparently in Eichendorff's mind during the early stages of the work on the *Taugenichts* was that of the errant

<sup>20</sup> HKA XIII 42.

<sup>21</sup> Feise, op. cit. p. 12; cf. also: M. Thalmann, Der Trivialroman des 18. Jahrhunderts und der romantische Roman. *Germ. Studien* XXIV, 1923, S. 319.

<sup>22</sup> A. Bechtold: *Schelmenroman* in Merker-Stammler. Cf. the attitude of the porter and the Kammerjungfer in the *Taugenichts*.

<sup>23</sup> W. Rehm: *Abenteuerroman* in Merker-Stammler.

minstrel of the middle ages, for the original manuscript of the work <sup>24</sup> bears the title *Der neue Troubadour* with the alternative suggestion *Der moderne Troubadour*. This title may have been prompted by Fouqué's valiant but misguided efforts to revive the troubadour type in his works of this period, and if so, one reason why Eichendorff later changed the title may well have been his gradual estrangement from his former friend and patron. A further and more cogent reason was his realization that the foreign title illfitted so thoroughly German a character as the *Taugenichts*, and that it failed to give satisfactory expression to the ideas he intended this figure to convey. It is therefore necessary now to examine these ideas more closely, in order to determine the symbolic content of the *Taugenichts*.

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It is difficult to agree with Gould that the work is intended as a satire on "certain phases of German romanticism".<sup>25</sup> There are undoubtedly satirical allusions in the *Taugenichts*, but to consider the whole work as an expression of sublimated anger at certain Romanticists <sup>26</sup> does justice neither to the *Novelle* nor to its author. Nor does the *Taugenichts* represent Eichendorff's ideal of a poet.<sup>27</sup> This ideal is to be found explicitly or implicitly in both *Ahnung und Gegenwart* and *Dichter und ihre Gesellen*, as well as in some of the lyrics, but the *Taugenichts* is too ethereal a figure, too devoid of high moral principles, soberness and strength of character, to fulfill the requirements set by Eichendorff for the true poet. Feise, as we have seen, finds the substance of the *Novelle* in its expression of the "Schicksalhaftigkeit des Lebenswegs", and with this there can be little argument. It is more difficult, however, to agree with Appelt that Eichendorff is guilty here of a flight from reality.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Mann, finally, in 1916 published an article on the *Taugenichts* which later appeared in altered form as a chapter in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. The latter title provides the key for his interpretation, which seems to have been written in intuitive fear of what has happened in present-day Germany, namely "die Politisierung des Geistes",<sup>29</sup> the usurping by the state of functions which Mann believes the sole concern of the individual — religion, philosophy, art, literature and science. This Mann believes to be contrary to the nature of the German people, whom he considers essentially impractical and unpolitical. In the *Taugenichts* he sees the true German spirit incorporated: ". . . wahrhaftig der deutsche Mensch!" <sup>30</sup> Of course Mann is here using the *Taugenichts* as a text from which to

<sup>24</sup> See the facsimile published as "Neunte Folge des Eichendorff-Jahrbuches Aurora", hrsg. von der deutschen Eichendorff-Stiftung, 1939.

<sup>25</sup> Gould, op. cit. p. 167.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 177.

<sup>27</sup> Bosselmann-Franzen, op. cit. p. 268.

<sup>28</sup> Appelt, op. cit. p. 276: "Der Held der Novelle, in seiner göttlichen Sorglosigkeit und Nichtachtung der Realitäten des Lebens, ist das in die höchste Potenz gesteigerte Ideal des weltabgewandten Dichters."

<sup>29</sup> Mann, op. cit. p. 1488.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 1482.

preach to his own generation, and his intention is not primarily to explain the objective significance of the work. Nevertheless, his interpretation comes close to the truth, for Eichendorff in the *Taugenichts* is also preaching, disclosing symbolically to *his* generation the evils from which he felt it was suffering. The *Novelle* is a polemic against the spirit of the times; not retreat from reality, but a subtle though none the less forceful criticism of certain trends in the life of his day.

Obviously this criticism is not openly expressed in the *Taugenichts*. The full import of the work becomes apparent when it is considered in conjunction with a less well known product of Eichendorff's literary activity written during the years in which the *Taugenichts* was taking shape, namely the dramatic satire *Krieg den Philistern* (1823). These two works, so unlike in form and literary quality, are closely related in spirit; indeed they are the positive and negative aspects of one and the same problem. If Gould was looking for satire in Eichendorff, he should have sought it in *Krieg den Philistern* rather than in the *Taugenichts*, for in this work the poet gives his invective free rein, slashing out mercilessly at all the follies of his day. In the *Taugenichts*, on the other hand, he gives us a positive affirmation of his ideal, in which alone, he believes, lies salvation. This ideal, it is true, amounts to a "Verpoetisierung des Lebens". In the second adventure (act) of *Krieg den Philistern*, the town council of the Philistine city meets to discuss ways and means of warding off the threatened attack of "die Poetischen". The Bürgermeister proclaims:

"Wir müssen

Die Poesie ganz ausrotten!

Doch — Herr Schulrat — was sagen Sie dazu?"

To which the Schulrat replies in true Philistine fashion:

"Aus den Klassikern lernen wir deklinieren,

Aus den Poeten richtig skandieren.

Doch das Träumen, poetische Walten —

Nein, das Zeug läßt sich jetzt nicht mehr halten."

The town fathers go on then to accuse the spring of hatching poets and making truants out of the school children. As harbinger of spring the lark is voted a dangerous bird — unless served up on a platter. Flowers are proclaimed to be the weeds of useful plants and should be uprooted (the parallel to the *Taugenichts* is self-evident), etc. etc. It is this prosaic viewpoint which Eichendorff challenges, but his proposed injection of poetry into life is no trifling matter. He is in dead earnest with his poetic ideal, for nothing less than the total meaning of life is at stake for him. To determine the nature of this ideal, it is necessary to examine more closely the character of the *Taugenichts* himself, remembering that he is not primarily a person but a symbol, and that his characteristics are to be interpreted in this light.

Only from this standpoint is it possible to grasp the full significance of the "Ichform" in this work, whereby Eichendorff, casting aside his customary reticence openly identifies himself with the cause he is pleading.



Now too, the reason for the Taugenichts' lack of a name becomes apparent, for by withholding from his hero this attribute of ordinary mortals, Eichendorff raises him above the common level of mankind. But not only in the lack of a name does the Taugenichts depart from the common run. The sublime innocence of his character is not earthborn but the arbitrary creation of a poet bent on revealing by contrast to his fellowmen the nature of true innocence. The Taugenichts is not an innocent human being, he is the embodiment of the concept of innocence itself, "der reine Tor" in a much more absolute sense than Parzival or Simplizissimus. Such innocence implies for Eichendorff the instinctive choice of a proper balance between the sensual world and the world of the spirit, instinctive knowledge that life on this earth is of no lasting value in itself but only a preparation for the better life to come, "... [jenes Reich] wofür ja überhaupt das irdische Leben nur die Vorbereitung und ein redliches Erkämpfen sein soll."<sup>31</sup> So skillfully does Eichendorff let the Taugenichts tread the narrow path between "Sinnenglück und Seelenfrieden" that one is quite willing to agree with Thomas Mann when he says: "Daß seine Reinheit nicht albern wirkt, ist eine starke poetische Leistung."<sup>32</sup>

In striking contrast to the heroes of Eichendorff's earlier narratives, the Taugenichts is a member of the lower classes, a miller's son. This too has an important bearing on the meaning of the *Novelle*, for it is among the common people (das Volk) that genuine simplicity is more apt to be encountered than among the upper classes, which are apt to be tainted with the false culture of the day. When the Taugenichts "meditates" or "philosophizes" by repeating the age old proverbs of the people, Eichendorff is not, as Gould would have it, satirizing primitivism as a literary mode, but giving expression to his profound respect for this popular wisdom, tested by time and deep-rooted in the genuine culture of the national past.<sup>33</sup> It should be noted also that the Taugenichts, who has never read a novel, such works being considered by many at this time an insidious influence on morality, is nevertheless well acquainted with *Die schöne Magelone*, which he had found among the old books of his father. Eichendorff has succeeded himself in striking a popular tone, particularly in the *Taugenichts* and in some of the lyrics. But one must guard against believing Eichendorff a friend of the people in any political sense.<sup>34</sup> His interest in "the other half" is limited strictly to the cultural values which it represents. Liberty, equality and fraternity are anathema to him. As soon as the people assume the aspect of a political entity, his class feeling as a member of the Silesian nobility gains the upper hand, and he is capable of bitter sallies against the democratic spirit:

<sup>31</sup> *Examensarbeit*, HKA X 154.

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit. p. 1482.

<sup>33</sup> The proverbs which the Taugenichts in a moment of weakness imagines he hears the porter saying (Bong III 37) are quite a different matter, serving to characterize the latter as a Philistine, especially his version of "Bleibe im Lande und nähre dich redlich", in which he substitutes "tüchtig" for "redlich".

<sup>34</sup> Cf. also Feise, op. cit. p. 15.

"Was! wir gering? Ihr vornehm, reich?  
 Planierend schwirrt die Schere,  
 Seid Lumps wie wir, so sind wir gleich,  
 Hübsch breit wird die Misere!" (*Krieg den Philistern*)

There is no question for Eichendorff but that the nobility must continue to be the leading class in public life, although it does them no harm now and then to take a lesson in simplicity from the common people. The *Taugenichts*, *nota bene*, does not marry the "viel hohe gnädige Frau" of his dreams, but only the porter's niece. And regardless of the high-sounding claims of Herr Leonhard at the end of the *Novelle* that love breaks down the bastions of rank, in the *Taugenichts* at least, the social barriers are left intact.

Eichendorff's political views, treated at length in *Krieg den Philistern* and elsewhere, are completely missing from the *Taugenichts*, but their absence is eloquent. We must recall Thomas Mann's interpretation of the *Novelle*, his use of it to portray the German national character as essentially unpolitical and devoted to the pursuit of cultural values. For Eichendorff, as for Mann, politics belong to the practical side of life, a necessity perhaps, but only a means, never an end. For this reason, political considerations have no part in his ideal as embodied in the *Taugenichts*, though he hoped indirectly to benefit his nation by striving for this ideal. Such hopes must have been shared by many young men in the trying days during and after the Wars of Liberation. In October, 1814, Eichendorff writes to Fouqué:

"Es gibt noch so Vieles, Großes und Freudiges zu vollbringen. Gott hat uns ein Vaterland wiedergeschenkt, es ist nun an uns, dasselbe treu und rüstig zu behüten, und endlich eine Nation zu werden, die unter Wundern erwachsen und von großen Erinnerungen lebend, solcher großen Gnade des Herrn und der eigenen kräftigen Tiefe sich würdig beweise. Und dazu braucht es nun auch andere Kämpfer noch, als bloße Soldaten. Wäre auch ich imstande, zu dem großen Werke etwas Rechtes beizutragen!"

Regardless of what one may think of Eichendorff's political views, his sincere patriotism is beyond question. And heartfelt patriotism, a truly German love of the land and language of his fathers, constitutes not the least of the *Taugenichts*' claim to the affection of the German people. What a depth of sentiment is conveyed by a single word, when the German painter in Rome cries out: "Vivat unser k ü h l g r ü n e s Deutschland da hinter den Bergen!"

It should be remarked that Eichendorff, in endowing the *Taugenichts* with this genuine patriotism, was as much interested in combatting certain unhealthy tendencies of the times, perhaps best designated by the term "Deutschtümelei", as in testifying to the sincerity of his own patriotic sentiments. Similarly, in portraying the naive simplicity of the common people, he is careful to point out the distinction between genuine "Volkstum" and sentimental "Volkstümelei", which latter he satirizes in

the figure of the "zierlicher junger Herr" who waxes so eloquent over the folksong.

No discussion of the *Taugenichts* would be complete without mention of his most characteristic trait, namely his chronic idleness. Not without cause is he known as the *Tauge-nichts*: certainly from a practical standpoint his existence reveals no useful purpose. But, as Thomas Mann points out, there is a subtle difference between *Nutzlosigkeit* and *Nichtsnutzigkeit*,<sup>35</sup> and it is the former which characterizes the *Taugenichts*. Man does not live by bread alone, nor, we might add with an eye to the *Taugenichts*, does he live merely to provide the wherewithal to perpetuate his existence on this earth. Once more the old theme of temporal life as preparation for the eternal: "Und zu was nützt denn am Ende alle gepriesene Nützlichkeit," says Eichendorff in a critical work of this period, "wenn sie zu dem unwandelbaren Ziele alles menschlichen Treibens, zur ewigen Seligkeit nichts nützt?"<sup>36</sup> The immediate source of this glorification of idleness in Eichendorff's own experience is not difficult to ascertain. At this juncture in his career he was irritated at having to take time out from living to provide the means of keeping himself and his family alive, dismayed at the piles of official documents which now stood between him and the freedom of soul to which he had been accustomed. Hence the petulant tone of a poem such as *Der Isegrim*.

However, Eichendorff's intention in writing the *Taugenichts* was not primarily to seek respite from this vexatious change in his manner of life. It is a revival of the old Romantic warcry against the Philistine, the prosaic materialist who judges everything according to its practical usefulness and sees value only in the tangible fruits of his daily toil.<sup>37</sup> The manifestations of this theme in the *Taugenichts* are too obvious to require repeating here. But is the *Taugenichts* completely immune to the appeal of Philistine life, the attraction of bourgeois comfort and security? There are, in fact, several episodes in the work where he seems to be about to turn Philistine himself,<sup>38</sup> especially after his appointment as tolltaker, when he dons the dressing gown, the very symbol of the Philistine, and decides to give up traveling, save his money, and amount to something. At least twice more, in the encounter with the peasant girl who holds out prospects of a rosy future if he will settle in her village, and during the sojourn in Leonhard's castle in Italy, he is confronted with the temptation of abandoning himself to bourgeois complacency. To be sure, in each case his true nature soon asserts itself, and he resumes his life of wandering, but the temptation is present none the less and must be accounted for. And what of the end of the story, where this superlatively Romantic figure is on the point of taking the highly un-Romantic step of getting married? One might mention further the unexpected turn at the end of the *Wanderlied der Prager Studenten*, the tolerant affection displayed by

<sup>35</sup> Op. cit. p. 1490.

<sup>36</sup> *Examensarbeit*, HKA X 180.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. Minor, *Zum Jubiläum E's*. *ZfdPh.* XXI, 1889, S. 220.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Bosselmann-Franzen, op. cit. p. 270 ff.

the Taugenichts for that arch-Philistine, the porter, and finally, the hero's secret envy of those who have homes of their own:

"Alles ist so fröhlich, und um dich kümmert sich kein Mensch. — Und so geht es mir überall und immer. Jeder hat sein Plätzchen auf der Erde ausgesteckt, hat seinen warmen Ofen, seine Tasse Kaffee, seine Frau, sein Glas Wein zu Abend, und ist so recht zufrieden . . . Mir ist's nirgends recht. Es ist, als wäre ich überall eben zu spät gekommen, als hätte die ganze Welt gar nicht auf mich gerechnet." (Bong III 27)

Indeed, this last reflection, coupled with the Taugenichts' appeal to his violin: "Komm nur her, du getreues Instrument! Unser Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt!" seems to contain an undercurrent of doubt on Eichendorff's part as to maintaining his ideal in the face of a hostile world.

The truth is that Eichendorff himself was no longer unshakably convinced that the Romantic way of life was the only one. The brief years of his married life had brought him a high degree of domestic happiness and a haven from the urging of a wanderlust which, as we have seen, at times became irksome. The example of his brother Wilhelm, who had abandoned literary aspirations for a government position in Austria, likewise tended to enhance his tolerance for the bourgeois mode of existence. Above all, as the years passed, Eichendorff began to find satisfaction in his own government position, despite petty annoyances and disappointments. This change in attitude is clearly expressed in a letter to his friend and superior, Theodor von Schön, written in the year in which the *Taugenichts* appeared: "... ich eile . . . nunmehr, Ew: X für das größte Glück, das Sie einem redlichen Manne schenken konnten, nämlich mich in eine Lage versetzt zu haben, wo ich mit Lust und Liebe arbeiten kann, nochmals meinen gehorsamsten und innigsten Dank abzustatten."<sup>39</sup> As early as 1817 he had written to Fouqué: "Ich bin nun als Referendar bei der [Breslauer] Regierung angestellt, und was ich dadurch an Zeit verliere, habe ich doppelt an Ruhe und entschlossenerem Zusammendrängen meiner Kräfte gewonnen. Und so kann mit Gottes Hilfe noch alles gut werden."<sup>40</sup> Certainly there is little left in these lines of the Romantic impatience with the constraint imposed by a bourgeois position on the free development of the personality.

Not that Eichendorff ever became unfaithful to his poetic ideal. To the end of his life he retained the youthful spirit of the wanderer, continuing his pilgrimage through life on a spiritual plane when outward circumstances made it no longer physically possible. The *Taugenichts*, then, represents primarily a glorification of the ideals of Eichendorff's youth, a challenge hurled in the face of a generation too much concerned with the things of this world. In addition, we are justified in reading into this *Novelle* the modest beginnings of a new spirit of tolerance, a gradual reconciliation with the limitations of bourgeois existence, a first step in the direction of literary Biedermeier.

<sup>39</sup> HKA XII 26 f.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. S. 20.



## VON STIFTER ZU RILKE

### Zur Geschichte des Individualismus im 19. Jahrhundert

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Stifter und Rilke stehen am Anfang und Ende einer Periode, die uns heute mehr und mehr als die entscheidende Periode der österreichischen Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert erscheint. Nicht nur das Werk dieser Dichter, die ganze geistige und kulturelle Struktur ihres Menschentums verraten eine Verwandtschaft, die trotz der historischen Ferne des einen vom andern bis ins Detail hinein verfolgt werden kann.

Nicht auf dieses Gemeinsame aber kommt es in erster Linie an, nicht auf den Versuch, den einen durch den anderen zu deuten, sondern auf die Aufdeckung dessen, was sich hinter der so offensichtlichen Familienähnlichkeit verbirgt, auf die Einsicht in den tiefgehenden Bedeutungswandel, dem das ganze kulturelle und soziale Gut des österreichischen Menschen von Stifter bis Rilke unterworfen war.

Das Werk zweier Dichter auf diese Weise herauszugreifen und als feste Punkte im Strom des allgemeinen Geschehens ins Auge zu fassen, mag dabei als willkürlich, wenn nicht gar als unerlaubt erscheinen. Und doch zeigt sich eine Dichtung, wenn sie so mit dem innersten Werden einer Zeit in Zusammenhang gebracht wird, gerade als das Höchste, was sie überhaupt sein kann: als Buchführung der Menschheit, als beispielhafte Fixierung eines Allgemeinzustandes in individueller Einkleidung.

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Das Österreich Stifters war das Österreich Metternichs, das Österreich der absoluten politischen Restauration. Keines der in den Freiheitskriegen befreiten Völker war durch die neugewonnene Freiheit so im innersten in Frage gestellt worden, wie die österreichische Monarchie. Nur mit allen dem Staate zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln hatte man hoffen können, das bereits Auseinanderfallende noch einmal in einem neuen, gewaltigen Staats- und Kulturorganismus zusammenzuschliessen. Mit einem kindlich skrupellosen Optimismus, der seinesgleichen nur in dem naiven Optimismus des frühen technischen Zeitalters hatte, war man an die Aufgaben herangetreten und hatte sie — wenigstens für den Augenblick — gelöst. So kam es, daß während der entscheidenden Jahrzehnte des beginnenden Jahrhunderts der erste Versuch in der Geschichte Mitteleuropas, mit politischen Mitteln einen historischen Prozess rückgängig zu machen, als durchaus geglückt erscheinen mußte.

Der junge, in politischen Dingen völlig unerfahrene Stifter jedenfalls, der in den 20er Jahren zum ersten Mal nach Wien kam, mußte diesen Zustand des gewaltsamen Kräfteausgleichs als das Natürliche, als wirkliches Gleichgewicht erleben. Er konnte sich jederzeit an das Erreichte halten. Das Kaisertum mußte ihm zudem als das Symbol, als der Gravitätspunkt des erneuerten Staates gelten, dessen repräsentativer Träger der Adel war. Das Beispiel der deutschen Klassik, das Beispiel Goethes, hatte ihn außer-

dem gelehrt, Harmonie nicht nur als organisches Wachstum, sondern ebenso sehr als Überwindung und Ausgleich des Gegensätzlichen zu verstehen. Wie dieser Ausgleich im Aufbau der restaurierten Monarchie zustande gekommen war, konnte er schon deswegen nicht sehen, weil er die Ideen der Restauration von Anfang an zu den seinen gemacht hatte.

Doch noch etwas anderes kam zu dieser Auffassung hinzu. Stifter kam aus einer Umgebung, für die die äußere Form wie die innere Wahrheit der katholischen Kirche eine unantastbare Selbstverständlichkeit bedeutete. Der gesellschaftlich-politische Aufbau des Staates aber mußte ihm als eine Wiederholung, als eine irdische Fortsetzung und Ergänzung der katholischen Hierarchie erscheinen. Wie das Priestertum die Kirche, so verwaltete der Adel den Staat, und der (in jedem Falle „gläubige“) Untertan hatte nur die eine Möglichkeit, die Führung seines äußeren Lebens in die Hände des Staates zu geben, so wie er die Gestaltung seines inneren Lebens der Kirche zu überlassen erzogen worden war. Eine Staatsform, die für die Sinne so leicht verständlich war, die sich so offensichtlich durch ihre Anlehnung an die herkömmliche Ordnung der Kirche heiligte, hatte für einen Stifter jede Berechtigung für sich.

Die Frage nach der Stellung Stifters zum Adel führt deswegen in das Zentrum seiner sozialen und politischen Anschauungen. Adel bedeutete ihm Verpflichtung in jeder Form, Bewahrung der Tradition, politische, geistige und kulturelle Repräsentation der ewigen göttlichen Wahrheit im Diesseits, wie sie sich in der Geschichte offenbart. Adel war ihm die sichtbar gewordene und vorbildlich vollendete Form eines Individualismus, der sich seiner menschlichen Grenzen bewußt bleibt und sich vorbehaltlos unter das Gesetz der Humanität stellt. Der Adel ist die höchste Stufe des Individualismus deswegen, weil er dank seiner sozialen Stellung in der Lage ist, die bewußte Kultivierung des Ich mit den nivellierenden Anforderungen der Umwelt in Einklang zu bringen. Der einzelne bedarf zu seiner vollen Entfaltung des anderen, mit, neben und unter sich, und an seinem Verhalten zum Mitmenschen zeigt sich der Grad der von ihm erreichten menschlichen Vollendung. So ist denn Stifters Werk, vor allem der *Nachsommer* und der *Witiko*, eine großartige Verherrlichung adeliger und geadelter Individuen, denen – bei freiem Zusammenschluß – der Austausch geistiger und materieller Güter ein Gottesdienst ist.

Es ist daher nur natürlich, daß der bürgerliche Stifter ein bürgerliches Bewußtsein weder besaß noch entwickelte, daß für ihn das Ziel des Bürgertums in einer Hinaufentwicklung zum Adel, in einer immer zunehmenden, unendlich fortschreitenden Identifikation des Bürgerlichen mit dem Adeligen bestand. Bürger sein, das hieß für ihn, sich in der Vorschule des Adels befinden. Risach, der bürgerlich-adelige Held des *Nachsommer*, ist deswegen von allen stifterschen Figuren die stifterische, er ist nicht nur ein belletristisches Wunschbild, sondern mehr: die dichterische Korrektur der bürgerlichen Lebensformen seines Dichters, das vollkommen ausgeführte Bild seines Ideals, sein Faust.

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Diese soziale und geistige Situation gilt es nun mit der des 70 Jahre jüngeren Rilke zu vergleichen. Nur 7 Jahre liegen zwischen Stifters Tod und der Geburt Rilkes, und nur etwas mehr als 50 Jahre zwischen den Entstehungszeiten ihrer ersten entscheidenden Werke. Nehmen wir aber den Charakter dieser beiden Dichtungen als Ganzes, oder versuchen wir vielmehr, die ihnen zugrunde liegende geistige Haltung herauszuschälen, so erkennen wir, daß hier nicht nur zwei literarische Perioden aufeinander gefolgt sind, die sich zueinander verhalten wie Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Vieles ist geschehen, das sich der politischen Geschichte Österreichs – vor allem aber der sozialen und ästhetischen Gesinnung des Österreichers tief eingeprägt hat. Die Begriffe Optimismus und Pessimismus beschreiben diese Wandlung nur sehr oberflächlich, aber der Eindruck einer Willensschwächung, einer lähmenden Enttäuschung ist unverkennbar. Was Stifter noch ersehnte, ist bei Rilke in Erfüllung gegangen – aber wie anders sieht diese Erfüllung aus, wie verschieden von dem, was Stifter sich erträumt hatte. Selbst das überzeitlich Österreichische in ihrem Wesen, das Gemeinsame und Verwandte ihres geistigen und seelischen Menschen hat bei Rilke eine ganz neue Bedeutung gewonnen.

Einer der auffallendsten Züge in der geistigen Struktur Stifters scheint auf diese Weise in Rilke seine Entsprechung zu haben: die für jeden Nicht-Österreicher beinahe unverständliche Überbetonung adeliger Lebensformen. Und doch handelt es sich gerade hier um nichts weiter als eine oberflächliche Ähnlichkeit. Während Stifter sich nämlich mit seinem Adelsideal in eine höhere Ordnung einzugliedern versucht hatte, vollzog Rilke mit eben demselben Ideal seinen Rückzug aus der Gesellschaft. Adel war ihm nicht mehr identisch mit sozialer und politischer Verantwortung im weitesten Sinne des Wortes, sondern nur noch mit einer seiner Teilfunktionen, der Kultur. Gleichsam unter der Hand war ihm die Welt des Adels zu einer ästhetischen Lebens-Form geworden, in der Leben wirklich nur noch Form bedeutete. Die Forderung adeliger Vervollkommenung, die für Stifter eine Aufforderung an das Individuum zum rückhaltlosen Dienst an der Gesellschaft gewesen war, hat für Rilke nur noch Sinn als Aufforderung zur schrankenlosen Selbstvervollkommenung des Individuums. Das aber ist nichts anderes als Dekadenz.

Ebenso wenig konnte Rilke in der sozialen Ordnung ein Spiegelbild göttlicher Ordnung sehen, in der staatlichen eine Wiederholung der kirchlichen Hierarchie. Adel und Priestertum hatten für ihn nichts Gemeinsames mehr, Religion und Politik waren ihm schlechthin unversöhnliche Gegensätze. Nicht nur eine Bindung gab es für ihn, die alle Gebiete des Lebens miteinander verknüpfte, sondern bestenfalls viele Bindungen. Die Trennung von Kirche und Staat ist in seinem Denken bereits vollkommen vollzogen, wobei der Staat als Idee aufgegeben und die Funktion der Kirche wesentlich reduziert worden ist.

Auf diese Weise war Rilke der Sinn für die wirkliche Bedeutung des Adels verloren gegangen. Adel ist ihm nicht mehr eine Idee, sondern nur noch ein Ideal, eine Angelegenheit persönlicher Verfeinerung. Daher

seine ausschließliche, sentimentalische Vorliebe für adeligen Umgang, wie sie sich auf jeder Seite seiner weitläufigen Korrespondenz manifestiert; daher nicht zuletzt der Formalismus seines dichterischen Stils, in dem die soziologisch bedeutsame Lösung der Form vom Inhalt sichtbar zum Ausdruck gekommen ist. So vollkommen identifizierte er in der Vorstellung sein Bürgertum mit dem Adel, daß er sich eine adelige Abstammung zudichten und damit eine ganze Generation von Literaturhistorikern hinters Licht führen konnte.

Trotz dieser fundamentalen Verschiedenheit scheint ihre soziale Gesinnung aber doch wieder in einem unmißverständlichen Konservativismus zusammenzustimmen. Das Wissen um den zu verwaltenden Kulturbesitz, um die Werte des geistigen und historischen Gewordenseins, um das im Individuellen zu bewahrende Ganze ist aus dem Bild des österreichischen Menschen nicht fortzudenken, es macht den Österreicher erst recht eigentlich zu dem, was er ist. Rilke, der Prager, war sich seiner kulturellen Verpflichtung allerdings früher bewußt als Stifter, dessen Weg aus der Natur in die Kultur ein schwerer und überwindungsreicher gewesen ist. Wir wissen, daß Stifter noch in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens durch sein ungeschliffenes Wesen in der Gesellschaft Anstoß erregt hat. Seine ländliche Herkunft, sein bäuerlicher Sinn hatten aber auch ihm früh die Augen geöffnet für das erhaltende Element in der Natur, hatten ihn das langsame und organische Werden, das Beharrende und Ewige in der Natur als die Grundwahrheit des Lebens erkennen gelehrt. Und das Beispiel der Natur hatte er nur auf die Kultur zu übertragen. Während Rilkes Konservativismus daher ein Produkt der Kultur selbst war, war der Stifters ein Produkt der Natur, war er wirklich natürlich. Stifter, mit anderen Worten, war hungrig, Rilke war satt. Stifters Dichtung war, gerade wegen ihrer konservativen Tendenzen, im höheren Sinne fortschrittlich, das liberale Element war ebenso sehr ein Teil ihres Ganzen, wie das Wachstum ein Teil der Natur war. Rilke aber fand jeden Fortschritt durch die Tradition verlegt und verbaut, sodaß für ihn eine Entwicklung nur in bewußter Durchführung des Individuationsprozesses möglich war, den sein Jahrhundert schon für ihn begonnen hatte.

Die soziale und kulturelle Gesinnung Stifters wie Rilkes läßt sich daher auf ihren Individualismus zurückführen. Die Geschichte des österreichischen Geistes (wie ähnlich auch des deutschen) von Stifter bis Rilke ist wirklich die Geschichte des Individualismus im 19. Jahrhundert. Individualismus, das war für Stifter noch die bewußte Steigerung der Persönlichkeit bis zu höchst-möglicher Vollendung, bei gleichzeitiger Unterordnung und Einordnung in das Ganze der Gesellschaft. Freiheit und Gesellschaft bedingten sich in einem solchen Weltbild wechselseitig, und die Bedeutung der Persönlichkeit lag in ihrer Vorbildlichkeit. Durch die Vervollkommnung des Ich wurde die Vervollkommnung der Gesellschaft erst eine Möglichkeit. Individualismus und Humanität sind auf diese Weise Begriffe, die sich in der Welt Stifters vollauf decken.

Der Individualismus Rilkes aber hatte jede soziale Begrenzung ein-



gebüßt, die einzige Bindung, die es für ihn gab, war die an das Irrationale. Vollendung ist ihm nur möglich in immer fortschreitender Trennung von der Gesellschaft, sodaß Individualismus zur vollkommenen Individuation werden mußte. Dieses Entwurzeltsein Rilkes — dieses Sich-selbst-entwurzeln — wird aber erst dann ganz verständlich, wenn man es mit dem Entwurzelungsprozeß des Österreichertums in Zusammenhang bringt. Als Rilke aufwuchs, war die „österreichische Frage“ im Grunde bereits entschieden, war der durch das Nationalitätenprinzip herbeigeführte Auseinanderfall so weit fortgeschritten, daß der Dichter seine Bindungen nur noch in sich selbst finden konnte, daß er auf das hinter dem Menschen Liegende, das Irrationale, zurückfallen mußte.

Irrationalismus aus Individuation aber ist eine ganz moderne Erscheinung, die — soziologisch-politisch gesehen — in den Kosmopolitismus führte. Es ist grotesk zu sehen, wie das 20. Jahrhundert dann versuchen sollte, den durch das Nationalitätsbewußtsein bedingten Kosmopolitismus ausgerechnet mit Hilfe des nationalistischen Prinzips, das vom Irrationalen so weitgehenden Gebrauch machte, zu überwinden.

Aus diesem so wesentlich gewandelten Individualismus läßt sich aber auch wieder Stifters und Rilkes entgegengesetztes Verhalten zu ihrer österreichischen Heimat erklären. Fühlte Stifter sich doch zeit seines Lebens nur als Österreicher, während Rilke für das Österreichische, besonders in seiner wienerischen Ausprägung, nichts als Geringschätzung besaß.

Stifters Dichtung hat denn auch beinahe ausschließlich österreichischen Hintergrund. Am Horizont fast all seiner Erzählungen und Romane ragen die Alpen, über deren Höhenzüge der Blick nur selten hinausgeht. Der *Abdias* ist wohl die einzige Erzählung mit einem ganz ausgebauten nicht-europäischen Milieu, einem etwas gemäldehaft-steifen, kinderbuchartig-primitiven Milieu, das immer Kulisse bleibt. Es ist aber bezeichnend, daß Stifter sich in der exotischen Umgebung Nordafrikas nicht lange wohlfühlt. Das Ende der Geschichte, mit der Übersiedelung des Abdias in ein österreichisches Alpental, ist wie eine Heimkehr Stifters selbst, und sobald er sich wieder in einer heimischen Landschaft befindet, werden die Farben der Erzählung lebendig.

Auf der anderen Seite ist es schwer, aus dem Stofflichen und aus der Motivwelt Rilkescher Dichtung das Österreichische eindeutig herauszuheben. Es ist freilich da, wie zum Beispiel im *Cornett* und selbst noch unter dem dänischen Kostüm des *Malte Laurids Brigge*, aber es hat keine nationale, geschweige denn eine soziale Bedeutung. Es gewinnt seine Gültigkeit einzig durch die persönliche Erlebnisgeschichte Rilkes, auf die er als auf etwas Verlorenes zurückschaut. Es ist abgelöstes, individualisiertes, entwurzelt Österreichertum, und seine innere Notwendigkeit liegt allein in der Phantasie und im Psychologischen. Ein Vergleich Rilkes mit Hofmannsthal würde noch genauer zeigen, wie weit in Rilke dieses österreichische Geschehen individuell überspitzt worden ist, denn Hofmannsthal hat, obgleich auch er in derselben Entwicklungslinie steht, den

Anschluß an die österreichische Tradition niemals verloren, in ihm, und nicht in Rilke, setzt sich das Grillparzer-Stiftersche Erbe Österreichs bis in die jüngste Vergangenheit fort.

Während Rilke sich von Werk zu Werk, von Jahrzehnt zu Jahrzehnt mehr von seinem österreichischen Ursprung fortbewegt, verwächst der reifende Stifter immer inniger mit ihm. Bis zu seinem letzten Atemzug klammert Stifter sich an seine Heimat, deren innere Zwiespälte er nicht nur zutiefst erlebt, die er, als ein echter Dichter der Restauration, zu verdecken und auf diese Weise zu überwinden als seine eigenste Mission erkannt hatte.

Ein Vergleich der letzten Lebensjahre Stifters und Rilkes wirft auf ihre gegensätzliche Haltung und Gesinnung, auf ihre polar auseinanderstrebende Entwicklungslinie ein klares Licht. Als in der Krise der 40er und 50er Jahre das Gebäude der österreichischen Staatskonstruktion von innen heraus bedroht war, erkannte Stifter sofort seine Aufgaben und meldete sich ohne Zögern zum Dienst. Unter diesem Dienst, dem Amt eines Schulrats, hat er gelitten, wie nur ein Dichter unter der niederdrückenden Wucht des Alltäglichen leiden kann, aber er hat ihn durchgeführt, bis zur völligen Zersetzung seiner körperlichen Gesundheit. Wir wissen heute, daß seine Dichtung an diesem Bruch groß geworden ist, daß er ihn zwar nicht zu einem sozialen Dichter, aber doch zu einem Dichter des Sozialen hat heranreifen lassen. Während Stifter so in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens sein dichterisches Werk der Ungunst der Verhältnisse abzurufen hatte, konnte Rilke sein Werk in der außermenschlichen Einsamkeit von Muzot vollenden. Muzot bedeutet wirklich das Ende eines Weges, eine Sackgasse des Menschlichen, die stellvertretende Erfüllung eines Zeitschicksals, und Rilkes Scheitern ist daher von einer unheimlichen Symbolhaftigkeit.

Aber Stifter und Rilke waren ja nicht nur Österreicher, sie waren auch beide Böhmen. In ihrem Verhältnis zur tschechischen Umwelt spiegelt sich noch einmal im Kleinen der große Auseinanderfall des österreichischen Nationalbewußtseins. Für Stifter – wie gleichzeitig auch für Grillparzer – war der Tscheche noch in erster Linie Österreicher, die tschechische Motivwelt ein Teil der österreichischen. Einen National- oder Rassenunterschied zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen gibt es in Stifters historischem Epos, dem *Witiko*, nicht, ein im Nationalitätenprinzip begründeter Völkerhaß in irgendwelcher Form findet sich auf keiner Seite dieses wirklich monumentalen Romans. Deutsche und Tschechen bilden vielmehr eine einzige große Familie, und indem sie in wechselseitiger Förderung ihren gemeinsamen Volkscharakter entwickeln und fortbilden, bilden und entwickeln sie die Idee einer gottgewollten, vollkommeneren Menschheit.

Als der junge Rilke dann, ein halbes Jahrhundert später, den Reichtum des tschechischen Volksliedes, die Tiefe der tschechischen Volksseele entdeckte, geschah dies ausdrücklich im Gegensatz, aus Opposition zu dem böhmischen Deutschtum, das er als seinem Wesen fremd empfand, gegen

das er sich auf Grund von Kindheitserlebnissen instinktiv auflehnte. Er liebte das Tschechische um des Tschechischen willen und ging ihm nicht nur liebevoll, sondern geradezu parteinehmend in den *Zwei Prager Geschichten* nach, nachdem es in lyrischer Form schon in seine *Frühen Gedichte* Eingang gefunden hatte. Die Zuneigung Rilkes zur tschechischen Seite Prags und Böhmens war für ihn eine Entscheidung, eine Entscheidung für das Tschechische und gleichzeitig gegen das Deutsche – und damit auch schon wieder eine Entscheidung gegen den Geist Österreichs.

Es ist freilich wahr, daß es für Stifter leichter war, sich in Böhmen-Österreich zu Hause zu fühlen. Stehen sich doch in Stifter und Rilke nicht nur zwei Seiten, sondern ebenso zwei Volksschichten des Deutsch-Böhmischen gegenüber. Stifters Heimat war das kleine Dörfchen Oberplan an der böhmisch-bayrischen Grenze. Heimat konnte ihm hier ein Wesensbestandteil der Natur sein. Rilke aber kam aus Prag, der Stadt der geistigen und politischen Gegensätze, dem Sorgenkind der österreichischen Monarchie seit Jahrhunderten. Rilke selbst hat den unglücklichen Einfluß des Städtischen auf seine Bildung sehr wohl gekannt. „Daß ich ohne Wohnung bin“, schrieb er noch 1920, „ist durchaus nicht meine Schuld; vielleicht, hätte meine Familie in den ihr durch die Zeiten hin vorlängst heimischen Ländern ihren alten Landbesitz behalten, ich hätte mir, wahrscheinlich, von der ererbten Stelle aus ein brauchbares Heimatbewußtsein entwickeln können. Die Stadt, in der ich aufwuchs, bot keinen rechten Boden dafür, ihre Luft war weder die meines Atmens, noch die meines Pflugs. So geschahs unvermeidlich, daß ich mir Wahlheimaten erwarb.“

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Der Gegensatz von Stadt und Land geht durch jede Zeile der Dichtungen Stifters und Rilkes. Er hat das Verhalten nicht nur zur Natur, sondern auch zum Menschen bestimmt, ja selbst der religiöse Charakter ihrer Persönlichkeiten, so tief dieser freilich mit dem historischen und politischen Geschehen Österreichs verwachsen ist, wäre doch ohne das Verständnis dieses Gegensatzes nur sehr unvollkommen zu verstehen.

Wenn Stifter einmal schreibt, daß er „seit Kindheitstagen viel, ich möchte fast sagen, ausschließlich mit der Natur umgegangen“ sei, daß er sein Herz an ihre Sprache gewöhnt habe und daß er diese Sprache liebe, „vielleicht einseitiger, als es gut ist“, so hat das in Rilke nirgendwo seine Entsprechung. Rilkes Verhältnis zur Natur war immer negativ. Natur hatte für ihn nur als Symbol, nur als Vergleich und Metapher einen Sinn, sie war ihm lediglich ein Träger, ein Gefäß für das von ihm hineinzugießende Gefühl. Schon das Erlebnis der russischen Landschaft, das den jungen Rilke so wesentlich beeindruckte, war typisch für sein Verhalten zur Natur, denn es war nicht die Fülle ihres Reichtums, die ihn hier berührte, sondern gerade ihre Leere, ihre Unkörperlichkeit. Nur dann konnte er sich in die Natur hineinfühlen, wenn die Natur gleichsam nicht da war, wenn sie ihm selbst ihre Vollendung überließ, wenn sie – ähnlich den Menschen, mit denen Rilke allein in eine innere Beziehung treten

konnte — keine Ansprüche an ihn stellte, sodaß er selbst sich in ihr wiederzufinden vermochte. Rilke war vielleicht der konsequenteste Egoist, selbst noch der Natur gegenüber, der jemals in die Seiten der deutschen Literaturgeschichte Eingang gefunden hat. Dieser Zustand aufnahmebereiter Leere aber war das, was er seine Einsamkeit nannte. Noch 1919 — das heißt einige Jahre vor der Erfüllung seiner dichterischen Laufbahn — gestand er, während eines Aufenthaltes in der Schweiz, daß er, „mit einiger Überwindung, sogar (!) zu der Natur“ gelangt sei. Der Vergleich mit dem Romantiker Tieck drängt sich hier auf, der ja wie Rilke ein Städter gewesen war und die Natur ebenso wenig von sich aus besaß wie er, nur daß Tieck sich — und das durchaus im Gegensatz zu Rilke — wirklich von früh auf nach der Natur sehnte. Der sentimentalische Charakter ihrer Dichtung jedenfalls hat hier seinen Grund.

Während Rilke also erst spät mit untauglichen Mitteln der Natur habhaft zu werden versuchte und sich schließlich nur widerwillig mit ihr einließ, war für Stifter die Natur ureigenster Besitz. In keiner seiner Erzählungen findet sich auch nur eine Spur sentimentaler Naturschwärmerei — es sei denn, daß sie in seinen ersten Versuch, den noch ganz unstifterischen *Kondor*, als Nachklängen einer verwässerten Romantik eingedrungen wäre. Natur war ihm eine Tatsache, eine Selbstverständlichkeit. Und wie er die Gesetze der Natur nur auf die Kultur anzuwenden hatte, so gaben sie ihm auch die Maßstäbe für seine Kunst. Sie halfen ihm zu jener architektonischen Geschlossenheit seines Werkes, zu der scheinbaren Monotonie seiner Erzählungskunst, die doch in Wirklichkeit nichts anderes ist als der Ausdruck eines klassischen Formwillens. Stifter fand die Form, während Rilke — als der Romantiker, der er war — immer nur Formen fand.

Das Verhältnis zur Natur aber bestimmt gleichzeitig auch das Verhältnis zum Menschen. Stifters Menschen sind ein Teil der Natur, aus der sie stammen, und im Grunde so problemlos wie sie. Ihr Leben geht auf und verwelkt wie das eines Gewächses, aus dessen Verfall das neue Gewächs seine Nahrung zieht. Man kann es zwar pflegen und veredeln, aber sein eigentliches Wesen läßt sich nicht wandeln. Leben, in menschlicher oder pflanzlicher Form, war eine Gegebenheit für ihn, deren unvergleichliche Schönheit das Objekt der dichterischen Beschreibung ist. Alles, was in der Dichtung über verehrende Beschreibung hinausgeht, ist daher schon gegen das Naturgesetz der Kunst. So war der Mensch für ihn ein Teil der Natur, wenn auch keineswegs immer ihr vollkommenster. Er war die Grundeinheit seiner dichterischen Spekulation. Es ist dabei kein Widerspruch für ihn, daß die Natur, von der der Mensch ein so wesentlicher Teil ist, doch wiederum die Schöpfung Gottes für den Menschen ist.

Für Rilke, auf der anderen Seite, bedeutete der Mensch als solcher nichts. Die Grundeinheit seiner Dichtung war das leblose, erst von ihm zu belebende Ding. Das Geheimnis und das Faszinierende, das Neue seiner Kunst lag in der Verdinglichung selbst des Menschlichen, die ein Produkt seines resignierenden Skeptizismus, des Skeptizismus seiner Generation war.

Schon in den Werken Stifters findet sich nun aber eine seltsame,



bisher völlig übersehene Vorliebe für das Wort „Ding“. So konnte Stifter einmal sehr bezeichnenderweise in einem Briefe an seinen Verleger Hekkenast den ganz rilkeschen Satz schreiben: „Ich glaube, daß die Dinge sich an mir versündigen“ — ein Satz, der unmittelbar in das Innerste unseres Problems hineinführt und einen Vergleich Stifters mit Rilke geradezu herausfordert. In dem Vorwort zu den *Bunten Steinen* hat Stifter die Gesetzhaftigkeit eben dieses Dinges zum literarischen Prinzip erhoben.

Auch Stifter geht also scheinbar von dem Ding aus. Aber indem er durch die Beschreibung Ding an Ding in den großen Organismus des Daseins einbaut, richtet er seinen Blick schon wieder über das einzelne Ding hinweg. Das Ding ist nicht selig in sich selbst, es wird, es hat eine Geschichte. Es steht am Eingang der Stifterschen Dichtung, aber es ist nicht ihr Ziel. Nicht um die Verdinglichung des Menschlichen geht es ihm, sondern um die Unterordnung des Menschlichen unter die Gesetze, die er in der Welt des Dinges als die natürlichen erkannt hat.

Wie anders war dieser Realismus Stifters gemeint als der mystische Realismus Rilkes. Rilke nämlich geht den entgegengesetzten Weg, er löst das Ding aus seinem Zusammenhang heraus, seine einmalige Erscheinung blendet ihn, er hält es vor sich hin und sucht durch übermenschliche Konzentration in sein Inneres vorzudringen. Das Dingliche hat Geschichte für ihn nur bis zu dem Augenblick, in dem er es anschaut, das Vergangene ist in ihm zum Übermaß enthalten, aber die Zukunft ist ihm versagt. Eine Beziehung zum Menschen hat es nicht, nur eine zum Göttlichen. Der naturwissenschaftliche Geist Stifters ist in Rilke zu einem metaphysisch-theologischen geworden. Und diese Selbstherrlichkeit des Dinges ist es, an der die Form des einzigen Romans Rilkes, des *Malte Laurids Brigge*, gescheitert ist, die jeden weiteren Versuch zu zusammenhängender Darstellung von vornherein verhinderte.

Die schrankenlose Sucht Rilkes nach Subjektivierung ist deswegen in Wahrheit eine Sucht nach Objektivierung, sein Mystizismus ein katholisch gefärbter Pantheismus. Der Weg Rilkes von Rußland zu Rodin ist ein ganz konsequenter Fortschritt, der Anfang und das Ende einer geraden Entwicklungslinie, die über die äußere Verdinglichung hinaus, in der eine dichterische Selbsterlösung nicht mehr möglich war, in die Welt der übermenschlichen Engel führen mußte, in der das Ding endlich menschlich-göttliche Formen annehmen und die Vereinsamung des Ich jenseits des Irdischen aufheben konnte. Und wenn man Schleiermachers berühmte Definition der Religion auf Rilke anwenden wollte, so könnte man sagen, daß Rilkes Religion Sinn und Geschmack für das Endliche — oder jedenfalls doch für das Unendliche im Endlichen gewesen ist. Das Ding hat ihm den freien Blick nicht nur ins Diesseits, sondern auch ins Unendliche verlegt, sind doch selbst die Engel noch eine endliche Begrenzung des Unendlichen, die das Göttliche weit jenseits unseres Blickfeldes rückt, und deswegen ist für ihn auch „das Göttliche nur außerhalb unser denkbar, als so ein Leuchtturm im mehr als unsrigen Raum“.

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Nichts unterscheidet Stifter und Rilke so sehr wie ihre religiöse Natur. Es ist bezeichnend, daß ihr Verhältnis zur katholischen Kirche, aus der sie beide herkamen, in jeder Hinsicht ihrer Haltung zur Gesellschaft entspricht. Staat und Kirche sind Ordnungen, die für den, der sich ihnen unterstellt, beide Sphären des Menschlichen vollkommen erfassen und regeln. Stifter erkannte dieses Ordnungsprinzip denn auch bedingungslos an, für ihn rechtfertigte das eine das andere. Rilke aber löste sich als Individuum aus der Ordnung der Kirche, wie er sich aus der Ordnung der Gesellschaft löste. Es war in erster Linie der Zustand der Bindung, in den dieses Prinzip den Menschen zwang, gegen den er sich wendete. Religion ohne Bindung aber ist nicht Religion, ganz sicher nicht im Sinne des Katholizismus. Das religiöse Leben Rilkes konnte sich daher so individuell entwickeln, wie nie zuvor bei einem katholischen Dichter Österreichs. Man könnte Rilke geradezu einen protestantischen Katholiken nennen, wenn es sich hier nicht um einen Individuationsprozeß handelte, der seiner Natur nach nicht religiös war, sondern die dogmatischen Fundierungen zusammen mit allen anderen in den allgemeinen Vorgang hineinzog.

Es ist freilich wahr, daß auch Stifters Religion sich schon aus Elementen zusammensetzte, von denen wesentliche Bestandteile nicht auf das katholische Credo zurückzuführen sind. Hier wird es deutlich, daß der Loslösungsprozeß des Individuums schon vor Stifter eingesetzt hatte, daß der Abbruch des österreichischen Gebäudes mit dem verspäteten Eindringen zuerst der Aufklärung und dann der deutschen Klassik in den österreichischen Raum begonnen worden war. In Stifters religiöser Welthaltung ist ein sonderbares Nebeneinander von wirklich kindlicher Frömmigkeit und humanistischer Weltfreudigkeit, in dem die tiefe Beeindruckung durch die deutsche Klassik nicht zu verkennen ist. Weltfreude und Weltverneinung sind in seinem Wesen eine Verbindung eingegangen, die die geistige Umbildung, wie sie in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts begann, vorzüglich charakterisiert. Darin allein wäre ein protestantischer Zug Stifters zu sehen, daß für ihn nicht nur die Kirche, sondern letzten Endes auch der einzelne die entscheidende Verantwortung für die Entfaltung des inneren Menschen trägt. Durch die Betonung des Ich aber wird die Eingliederung des einzelnen in den Organismus der Kirche noch in keiner Weise berührt. Die Emanzipierung des religiösen Individuums ist damit zwar angebahnt, aber sie ist doch auch wieder eingeschränkt durch das unerschütterliche Einordnungsbedürfnis, das die kirchliche wie die staatliche Ordnung nicht nur hinnimmt, sondern geradezu danach verlangt.

Es ist ausserordentlich schwer, bei der in religiösen Dingen so hartnäckigen Wortkargheit des sonst so ungemein mitteilbaren Stifter, wie bei dem gesprächigen Mystizismus des sonst so scheuen und wortkargen Rilke, das einzelne ihrer religiösen Anschauungen und Gesinnungen herauszugreifen und zu vergleichen. Einen klaren Einblick in die Struktur ihres religiösen Bewußtseins gewährt uns aber eine Gegenüberstellung ihrer Haltung zum Urproblem der Religion, zum Tode.

Stifter, dem die Wirklichkeit des Diesseits, die Herrlichkeit der Welt als Gottesschöpfung durch nichts zu erschüttern war, hatte eine merkwürdige Scheu vor dem Tode. Die Botschaft der deutschen Klassik, die ihn früh gelehrt hatte, den Tod durch Form zu überwinden, war in seinem Denken auf das damit an sich unvereinbare „Memento mori“ der Kirche gestoßen und zu einem Konflikt geworden, der sich nur durch völliges, instinktives Negieren, ein geradezu planmäßiges Nicht-zur-Kennntnis-nehmen des Todes verdecken ließ. Die Lösung eines Konfliktes durch dessen Verdeckung war dem Menschen der Restauration durchaus geläufig. In Stifters Erzählungen und Romanen, in denen keine Phase des Wachstums übersehen wird, wird doch der Kreislauf des Lebens niemals geschlossen, ist das Sterben geradezu verheimlicht worden. Wo einmal der Tod einer Figur berichtet werden muß, wie der Tod der Frau und der Tochter des Abdias, geht die Erzählung mit nicht mißzuverstehender Hast darüber hinweg, sodaß der rätselhafte Abgrund des Lebens ebenso schnell verdeckt wird, wie er aufgebrochen war. Im *Nachsommer* wird überhaupt nicht gestorben, während der Tod im *Witiko* nur eine historische, eine unpersönliche Rolle spielt. Einer der gehemmtesten und gewundensten Briefe in der Korrespondenz Stifters ist der Beileidsbrief an Heckenast, nach dem Tode von dessen erster Frau. Was hier eine Antwort auf die Frage nach dem ewigen Leben sein soll, ist vielmehr das stumme Eingeständnis, daß Stifter eine solche Antwort nicht hat – oder doch nicht auszusprechen wagt.

Es ist eben doch nicht genug, in Stifter den Dichter der Wirklichkeit zu sehen, denn Wirklichkeit ist beides, Leben und Sterben. Stifter war der Dichter der Wirklichkeit des Lebens. Sein ganz uneingeschränktes Vertrauen gilt dem lebenden und daher handelnden Menschen, der sich in unendlichem Werden zur Vollkommenheit des Kunstwerkes entwickeln und damit die Formlosigkeit durch Form überwinden kann. Das Erlebnis der Form ist ihm deswegen nicht ein ästhetisches, sondern ein Lebens-Erlebnis. Und von hier aus, in einer gewaltigen Steigerung, fand er seinen Weg als Dichter in den Mythos, der ein Mythos des Menschen, das heißt ein Mythos des Daseins, der Geschichte (*Witiko*) war.

Ganz anders war der Tod das Zentralgeschehen in der Dichtung Rilkes. Der Tod ist ihm das wesentlichste Geschehen nicht nur, weil es das unbegreiflichste, sondern vor allem, weil es das individuellste ist. Diese Auffassung des Todes betont vor allem der *Malte Laurids Brigge*, der sich nicht genug tun kann in der genauen Differenzierung individueller Todesarten. Aber schon der frühe Rilke hatte das Problem des Todes als sein innerstes Problem erkannt, und das „Schlußstück“ des *Buches der Bilder* trägt seinen Titel wirklich zu Unrecht, denn es könnte als Motto über der ganzen Dichtung Rilkes stehen:

Der Tod ist groß.  
Wir sind die Seinen  
Lachenden Munds.  
Wenn wir uns mitten im Leben meinen

Wagt er zu weinen  
Mitten in uns.

Leben ist Tod, und Tod ist Leben. Die Sinnlosigkeit des Todes ist die Sinnlosigkeit des Lebens. So konnte ihm Paris als die Stadt des Todes erscheinen, da es die Stadt des konzentriertesten Lebens war. Einige der stärksten Szenen in seiner Dichtung, Szenen von unvergleichlicher Intensität, sind Krankheits- und Sterbeszenen, und selbst noch der natürliche Verfall unbelebter Dinge erschien ihm als eine Form des Sterbens. Das Frau-werden der Mädchen, das Reifen in der Natur, und selbst Einsamkeit, Traum und Schlaf waren ihm Daseinsformen, die nur den hinter ihnen verborgenen Tod gleichzeitig verhüllten und andeuteten.

Auch Rilkes Denken war also, wie das Stifters, ein intellektuelles Fliehen vor dem Tode, der ihn deswegen so magisch anzog, weil auch der Tod ihn floh, weil er sich seinem Verstehen entzog. Es war aber nicht eine Flucht in die Wirklichkeit, wie die Stifters, sondern in die Überwirklichkeit des Ästhetischen, in die Kunst. Der Mythos, den Rilke sich schuf, war daher folgerichtig ein Mythos der Kunst, und Orpheus wurde ihm dessen symbolische Verkörperung.

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Die vollkommene Umwertung eines ursprünglich gemeinsamen Erbgutes von Stifter bis Rilke ließe sich weiter bis in die persönlichsten Züge ihrer Charaktere und ihrer Dichtungen verfolgen. Wie ähnlich, und doch wie verschieden in ihren Auswirkungen, ist die Rolle des Kindes, der Frau und des Greises in den Dichtungen Stifters und Rilkes. Wie ähnlich ist das Verantwortungsgefühl dieser Dichter vor ihrem Werk, und die beinahe völlige Humorlosigkeit ihrer Dichtungen — und doch: wie ganz anders ist der geistige Gehalt ihrer Werke, wie gänzlich entgegengesetzt ihre Botschaft.

Vielleicht lassen sich diese Gegensätze noch am ehesten auf die Begriffspaare „Werden“ und „Geworden-sein“ zurückführen. Es ist das natürliche Werden, dessen Dichter Stifter wurde, während Rilkes Dichtung an dessen Ende steht und das fertige Sein, das Gewordene in seiner letzten Phase, kurz vor dem Zerfall, festzuhalten sucht.

Stifter, der Dichter des natürlichen Werdens — Rilke, der Dichter des geistigen Seins; Stifter, der Dichter der unscheinbaren Bewegung — Rilke, der Dichter des Vollendeten und doch nicht mehr Greifbaren: das ist der Weg vom entwicklungsgläubigen Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts zum übersättigten, impressionistisch vom Augenschein ausgehenden und expressionistisch über ihn hinausstrebenden 20. Jahrhundert.



## BERICHTE UND MITTEILUNGEN

### General Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of German Boston, Massachusetts — December 29, 1940

The ninth annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of German was held in Boston on December 29, 1940, at the Statler Hotel. It was attended by approximately 100 members or nearly twice the number that were in attendance at the New Orleans meeting last year.

Two factors account for the smallness of the gathering: the place and the time of meeting. The latter factor — meeting on a Sunday following the M. L. A. sessions — could not have been avoided; the alternative would have been to hold a meeting on December 26, which would have compelled many members to leave their homes on Christmas Day or else the meeting could have been held on one of the days when the M. L. A. was in session. This did not seem advisable because a large number of our members desire to attend those sessions.

The program comprised four topics:

- (1) "Methods in Presenting Grammar" by Professor Meno Spann of the State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.
- (2) "Kulturkunde bei der Darbietung idiomatischer Ausdrücke" by Professor F. W. Thiele of the City College, New York, N. Y.
- (3) "Fremdsprachen im Rahmen der nationalen Erziehung" by Professor Robert Ulich of the Graduate School of Education, Harvard University.
- (4) "Basic German at Clark University" by Professor H. M. Bosshard of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Lack of space prevents us to give the content of all four papers, hence we limit ourselves to the topic presented by the guest of our Association, Professor Ulich. He said in substance:

"The discussion about the value of foreign languages has, during the last two decades, centered one-sidedly around psychological problems of learning and the curriculum; the advocates of languages generally defending, and professional psychologists and educators generally attacking the theory (problem of "transfer") of the formal and disciplinary effect of philological studies.

"It is undoubtedly a sign of progress that educators, since the days of Mulcaster and Comenius, have increasingly emphasized the nature of the child and the psychological character of learning. But it is one-sided to visualize the educational process as something which should be determined exclusively by the nature of the child. Rather we must understand education as a process operating between, and constantly connecting, two poles, one of which represents the child, and the other the objective requisites of the civilization in which the young is going to live.

"In this objective civilization the young comes primarily in contact with his nation, which is the greater cultural unit he will have to serve as an adult. But no nation can afford to consider itself as an isolated unit.

It needs a considerable number of persons who are able to interpret to other nations the character and aims of their own nation and to inform themselves and their own people about the life of other peoples. Otherwise two dangerous effects will result. First the individual nation will cut itself off from the common reservoirs of human and scientific progress and it will lose in depth and breadth of outlook and be increasingly dominated by persons with a merely sectional, an historical, and non-comparative aspect. Secondly, as a corollary to the first factor, the consciousness of the cultural community of mankind will decrease more and more at a time when the technical means of international communication will increase.

"The objection will be raised that the present period of international conflict—which is at the same time a clash of systems—makes such communication unnecessary and even dangerous. The objection, though emotionally understandable, is not conducive to real national interests. It is a mistake to suppose that conflict between nations, as between persons, amounts to severance of relations. Conflict is only another, but certainly a very intense form of relationship. Exactly in times of tension nations have generally been more damaged by too little, instead of too much knowledge of the conditions of other countries. In addition, all great nations, in the course of their history, have produced values in art and thought which belong to mankind, and no longer exclusively to them alone. These are surely reasons of weight for the continued study of foreign languages in our American schools.

"There is, of course, one condition to make the foregoing statement concerning the necessity of philological studies true. The teachers of foreign languages must not be led by their interest in foreign countries to neglect their obligations to the nation the children of which are entrusted to them, and to mistake information about conditions in other nations for propaganda of ideas adverse to the traditions and interests of the country in which they teach."

At the meeting of the Executive Committee held on the previous day a plan for a Werbeaktion or membership drive was approved providing for the following procedure:

1. The March issue of the *German Quarterly* is to be devoted mainly to promotional efforts in securing new subscribers and members not only among our colleagues but also among persons interested in our aims. A sufficiently large number of copies is to be printed so as to give each chapter enough copies for distribution.
2. Each chapter is to be asked to prepare a special meeting early in March to which all teachers of German and other interested persons are to be invited, for the purpose of a membership drive.
3. It is suggested that the agenda for this special meeting in March include the following:
  - (a) How can German instruction be furthered in your state?
  - (b) In what respect can the A. A. T. G. as such be of assistance in your chapter?
  - (c) How can the individual teacher be helped?
  - (d) What type of articles in the *German Quarterly*—methodology, pedagogy, grammar, literature, general language, etc.—do you think are most advantageous to further our cause?

- (e) List of teachers who are not yet members of the A. A. T. G. are to be procured by officers of the chapters. These lists are to be sent to the Secretary and the Business Manager of the national body.

If these promotional efforts are successful, the *German Quarterly* can be considered enlarged and longer articles may be published in separate issues.

- 4. The secretaries of the local chapters are to be asked to send a brief report of the outcome of this special meeting to the Managing Editor of the *Quarterly* by April 5th at the latest so that a summary may be printed in the May issue.

The plan was discussed in the general assembly's business session by Messrs. Busse, Funke, Reinsch, Hauch, Mankiewicz, von Gruening, Roeseler, and Miss Geiger. Professor Reinsch suggested that, in addition to the steps proposed in this Werbeaktion, the Executive Committee should undertake as wide a distribution as seemed feasible of Dean Doyle's "Language Leaflets" (now ten in number) and of Professor Zeydel's booklet, "Foreign Languages in School and Life," published by the National Education Association as No. 117 in the "Personal Growth Leaflet" series. The motion was then put to vote and carried unanimously.

Another item of importance was the report of the Committee for the Revision of the Constitution (Messrs. Lenz, Kramer, Moore and Barnstorff, Chairman). Very substantial changes were advocated by the Committee and additional changes suggested in the general discussion. A vote on the proposed changes will be taken at the next annual meeting in Indianapolis.

The Secretary is happy to report that our esteemed colleague, Professor A. R. Hohlfeld, was elected, by an unanimous rising vote, the first honorary member of the Association, with the gathering's heartiest good wishes to his 75th anniversary.

—C. M. Purin, Secretary.

### Resolutions of the Executive Council of the Modern Language Association of America on WHAT THE HIGH SCHOOLS OUGHT TO TEACH

The Executive Council of the Modern Language Association of America at its session of December 28, 1940, considered a report submitted by a Special Committee of the National Youth Commission entitled *What the High School Ought to Teach*. The Council noted that this document was received by the Commission with "great approval of the major conclusions and recommendations," and that it has been widely distributed and publicized. It noted that the Special Committee was composed of five professors of education, three superintendents of urban school systems, and two other administrators, and included no representative of the great army of teachers engaged in instructing American youth in the humanistic branches of the curriculum; and further, that in its treatment of what it classifies as the "conventional subjects," the report sets forth an entirely inadequate and in some respects a distorted picture of the values of Eng-

lish and the foreign languages in preparation for life in a democratic society.

In view of these facts the Executive Council adopted the following resolutions:

**RESOLVED:** *first*, that the Council protests the implication in selecting the Special Committee that the program of the high schools should rest solely on the theories of teachers of education and administrators, and that teachers who represent curricular subjects of non-professional and non-vocational content have no contribution to make;

*Second*, that the Council rejects the implication in statements of the report that more instruction in the so-called social studies is a better preparation for meeting the demands of a "wider social order" and the fulfillment of the obligations of American citizenship than the development of ability for clear and adequate expression in English or ability in the use of a foreign language;

*Third*, that the Council regards the statement of objectives and present practice in the teaching of English and the foreign languages as inadequate and misleading, especially in the failure to recognize the constant re-adaptation in the treatment of these subjects in step with real progress in education;

*Fourth*, that the Council, speaking for the more than 4,000 members of the Modern Language Association and other thousands of modern language teachers throughout the country, recognizes the necessity for constant changes in content and method in education in response to new needs and emergencies and offers its aid to the Youth Commission and all other agencies in carrying out these adaptations in such a manner as to preserve the humanistic elements in the curriculum. These it believes to be necessary to secure the spiritual freedom and happiness of the individual and to defend and perpetuate our national culture;

*Fifth*, that copies of these resolutions be sent to the President and the Secretary of the National Youth Commission and its sponsor, the American Council on Education, to the members of the Special Committee, and to periodicals devoted to the teaching of English and the foreign languages.

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### The Paul Ernst Society

Members of the PAUL ERNST SOCIETY and friends dined together at the Hotel Pilgrim in Boston on December 28. At the business meeting which followed the dinner the following officers were elected:

Professor Camillo von Klenze, President.

George Madison Priest, Princeton University, Vice-president.

Jane F. Goodloe, Goucher College, Secretary-Treasurer.

Advisory Committee: Ernst Rose, Chairman, Ernst Jockers, Hans Boening, Fritz Semmler, Hubert J. Meessen.

Few creative writers have left to posterity such an imposing body of belles lettres, fewer still such a heritage of literature supported by a comparable amount of literary criticism and of writings of social, economic, philosophic and religious import as Paul Ernst (1866-1933). But a prophet is without honor in his own country and in his own time. It is perhaps,



therefore, not surprising that recognition of Paul Ernst both as poet and as critic should have set in after his death and should be developing, at least proportionately, more rapidly in the United States than in his native Germany.

The extent of this interest in Paul Ernst in the United States is attested to by the number of doctoral dissertations, master's essays and articles on Paul Ernst that have appeared in the last three years and by the editions of his works prepared for class use. (See the announcement of the Paul Ernst Society in the November issue of the *German Quarterly* and current bibliographies). From the subject of these dissertations, essays and articles the uninitiated may gain a first impression of the scope of Paul Ernst's interests, though an adequate idea cannot be obtained even from the mere titles of Paul Ernst's own numerous essays. For this reason it is hoped that many will make use of the Namenregister which is to appear in the 1941 Jahrbuch der Paul Ernst Gesellschaft. A wider knowledge of the scope of Paul Ernst's writing should make it impossible for outstanding scholars to present papers on such subject as German Classicism and Hebbel's conception of necessity without mentioning Paul Ernst's name.

This winter, for the first time, a paper on Paul Ernst was read before the MLA: "Paul Ernst's Transition from the Drama to the Epic" by H. J. Meessen, University of Minnesota. It seems all the more probable that the subject of this paper had something to do with the attraction of an audience of 250 persons, since most of those present withdrew after it was read without waiting for the rest of the program.

On its third anniversary the Paul Ernst Society was able to offer to an audience of forty representative scholars and students a program of four papers of such interest and excellence that several of those present pronounced it to have been the best program heard in the course of the Boston meetings. After the papers of Henrietta von Kenze, Ernst Rose and Adolph Gorr, Professor Camillo von Klenze spoke with his characteristic ease and brilliance of Paul Ernst's significance for the American teacher of German. He pointed out that a poet like Paul Ernst, who, through his contact with realism had acquired intellectual discipline, psychological insight and breadth of horizon and had then overcome the positivistic tendencies of realism in favor of a constructive, heroic and metaphysical philosophy, has for us an important message. We, too, whatever the outcome of the European war, stand on the threshold of great changes to come. We shall be able to solve the problems that confront us only by overcoming our present tendency to defeatism, such as found its perhaps most complete expression in Dos Passos' *The Adventures of a Young Man*, and also by rejecting the exaggerated emphasis on human frailty, as something that undermines our conception of true greatness — for example, in the case of Washington through one-sided "debunking" and in the case of Goethe in *Lotte in Weimar*. Who, he asked in conclusion, can help us better in our present situation than the author of *Ein Credo* and *Grundlagen einer neuen Gesellschaft*, of *Saat auf Hoffnung* and *Brunbild*?

Membership in the Paul Ernst Society is open to all interested upon the payment of the dues (\$2.50) to the Secretary-Treasurer. This entitles the member to the Jahrbuch and to the annual Mitteilungen der Paul Ernst Gesellschaft. The Jahrbuch contains each year material from Paul Ernst's

Nachlass, much of it as interesting and important to the student as that available in the *Gesammelte Werke*. The 1940 and 1941 Jahrbücher will be furnished, at an extra charge of sixty cents each, bound like the volumes of the *Gesammelte Werke*.

—Jane F. Goodloe, *Secretary-Treasurer*.

### Graduate Fellowship for German Studies at an American University, 1941-1942

offered by the Germanistic Society of America and administered by the  
Institute of International Education

For the past ten years, the Germanistic Society of America has awarded a graduate fellowship to an American student for study in a German-speaking country under the auspices of the Institute of International Education. Because of the war, the Society has voted to grant the fellowship to a student wishing to pursue graduate studies in the German language and literature at an American university, the university to be selected by the successful candidate, subject to the approval of the Fellowship Committee. The fellowship carries a cash stipend of \$750 and is open to both men and women. Candidates must be under thirty years of age. They must be unmarried at the time of application and during tenure of the fellowship. Those already having the Ph.D. degree are not eligible. Seniors are not eligible.

Applications and all required credentials must reach the Germanistic Society Fellowship Committee, Institute of International Education, 2 West 45th Street, New York City, not later than March 15, 1941.

## BÜCHERBESPRECHUNGEN

### In Dichters Lande,

Jane F. Goodloe, *F. S. Crofts & Co.*, 1939.  
201 pages.

It is probably true that most text-books have been motivated by money. Sometimes, however, a text appears which clearly reflects the editor's sincere personal interest in his or her material, and which — with its matrix of emotion — has esthetic merit independent of the literature reproduced. *In Dichters Lande* is such a book. It contains stories, poems, and scraps of autobiography borrowed from four of Miss Goodloe's favorite writers: August Winnig, Ernst Wiechert, Hermann Hesse, and Börries, Freiherr von Münchhausen, of whom the last named is given the most space and tribute. Indeed, on the basis of statements in the preface and the introduction, we might surmise that the text was prepared in honor of the baron's sixty-fifth birthday and of his wife's "Waldhimbeeren-

Marmelade". All good friends of raspberry jam should therefore come to the aid of this book.

There are 105 pages of reading-matter, 95 pages of vocabulary and notes, and ten introductory pages of critical and biographical comment. The reading-matter is consistently interesting. Of greatest merit and appeal are Münchhausen's lyrics, Hesse's little known sketch "Tragisch", and the selections from Wiechert's "Wälder und Menschen". Students in the third semester of German should have a pleasant and not too difficult time with this reader.

—Victor J. Lemke

*West Virginia University.*

### Elementary German Reader with Grammar Review,

Ernst Koch. *Prentice-Hall*. 1939.

This book contains 80 pp. of prose by standard authors, Frenssen, Hauff, Kleist,

Zschokke, and 20 pp. of lyrical poems, old and new. In view of the trend of recent years toward 'graded' reading for beginning courses one is somewhat surprised to see Hauff's *Der Affe als Mensch* and Zschokke's *Der zerbrochene Krug* listed as *elementary*, especially since the editor combines with this reading matter a grammar review which sets a complete elementary grammar course as a prerequisite. *Intermediate* reading would far more accurately describe the selections here offered. As intermediate reading the selection is good, representative, and interesting.

Notes treating unusual expressions and odd grammatical items are given at the bottom of each page to facilitate rapid reading. In general these notes are adequate although one might be inclined to argue some points with the editor. The use of obscure and antiquated English words (Duncker: Zounds) for modern German expressions always seems inappropriate, and the use of technical terms where an ordinary word is available (Ansatz: embouchure) require many a student to use an English dictionary in addition to the German-English vocabulary. 'Mouthpiece' would be far more welcome in these parts of the country with their 'cultural lag'. There are not many such instances in this book, however.

The grammar review section of some 30 pp. is clear as well as concise and the examples are well chosen. There are not many exercises and they stress those points most important for accurate reading. The absence of the usual 'Fragen' is much to be appreciated. (Was tut Fritz jetzt?) The reviewer hopes that the omission of this feature will become a habit with book-makers. If the teacher cannot formulate the questions himself, how is he going to be able to judge the answers? The vocabulary of the grammar review is not limited to that of the reading selections as it well might have been. In the list of strong verbs *ist* is printed in heavy type with the past participle of some verbs (scheiden—schied—ist geschieden). A search in hopes of finding a transitive use of this verb in the text proved futile and the word does not occur in the German-English vocabulary.

The book can be recommended with some enthusiasm for use in third-semester college classes, especially in cases where an intervening summer has dimmed the memory of vocabulary and grammar learned in a limited-reading elementary

course and where the personnel of the class is very diversified as to previous training. The price (\$1.50) seems high for the amount of material offered.

—William Kurath

University of Arizona, Tucson.

**Die Karawane,**

Wilhelm Hauff;

**Der Schmied seines Glückes,**

Gottfried Keller. Edited in one volume with notes, exercises and vocabulary by George H. Danton. Farrar and Rinehart. New York. 249 pp. \$1.25.

It was a decidedly good idea to edit those two well-known stories in one volume as they supplement each other. Like a wholesome ham sandwich after a big piece of sweet cake is the humorous realism of Keller's after Hauff's seven charming fairy-tales. What student would not be ready and willing to work hard to analyse Keller's complicated philosophical constructions after 115 easy pages of Hauff's stories, written for children? Thus this graded reader is just the right thing for the beginning or middle of the second college year or corresponding high school course in German when the change from simple books to more complicated ones has to be made.

This book has been edited very skillfully. The two introductions and the preface "to the student" are great assets. They make him think about the stories and attempt to give him a certain independence in literary judgment. The accompanying apparatus is well adapted to the peculiarities of the stories. While the fairy-tales — intended for rapid reading — are followed only by notes, the short story — meant for concise work — is completed by ten pages of exercises. They are based on such parts of the text as the editor considered grammatically and syntactically worth while. These exercises are mainly supposed to sharpen the student's understanding of shades in the meaning of words and their construction from roots, pre- and suffixes. The copious vocabulary is very clearly printed.

As similar and much less well edited stories of both authors have been tried for years in schools and have been well liked, these two are bound to have a lasting success, even if they will not create a sensation.

After all, the student gets two pieces of good literature for only \$1.25.

—Elisabeth Mayer

Smith College.

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